

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 434 844

SO 029 711

AUTHOR Warner, Rachel, Ed.
TITLE Voices from Zaire = Les Voix du Zaire = Mingongo ya Zaire = Ndinga ya Zaire. African Voices Series.
INSTITUTION Minority Rights Group, London (England).
ISBN ISBN-1-897693-11-7
PUB DATE 1995-00-00
NOTE 45p.; Title and selected text in four languages: English, French, Kikongo, and Lingala. For related items in the African Voices Series, see SO 029 708-710.
AVAILABLE FROM Minority Rights Group, 379 Brixton Road, London, UK, SW9 7DE. Tel: (+44) (0 171 978 9498.)
PUB TYPE Collected Works - General (020) -- Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052) -- Multilingual/Bilingual Materials (171)
LANGUAGE French, English
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS African Culture; *African History; Childrens Writing; Colonialism; Cultural Context; Developing Nations; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Global Education; Multicultural Education; *Personal Narratives; *Refugees; *Relocation; Social Studies; *Youth
IDENTIFIERS England; *Zaire

ABSTRACT

This multi-language (French, English, Kikongo, and Lingala) collection of autobiographical writing by refugees from Zairean children and young adults living in Britain is illustrated with photographs and children's drawings and includes comprehensive country introductions. In the collection, young people give their accounts of migration and explore how their identities are changing in their new country. The writings can be a useful resource for teachers, particularly those who want to bring a global dimension to learning. Following a "Factbox" (country introduction) and an introduction for teachers that provides historical background on Zaire, the collection is divided into the following sections and each section has several writings: (1) "Souvenirs du Zaire" ("Memories of Zaire"); (2) "La Vie au Zaire" ("Life in Zaire"); (3) "Oppression et Guerre" ("Oppression and War"); (4) "Ma Vie" ("My Life"); (5) "Depart du Zaire" ("Leaving Zaire"); (6) "Arrivee en Angleterre" ("Arriving in England"); (7) "La Vie en Grande-Bretagne" ("Life in Britain"); (8) "Etre Refugie" ("Being a Refugee"); and (9) "Espoir pour L'Avenir" ("Hopes for the Future"). Includes a resources section that lists books, briefing papers, fact sheets, materials on refugees, and useful addresses. (BT)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED 434 844

SO

SO 029 711

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFORM
AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC
COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

A. Warren

2A TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to
improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this
document do not necessarily represent
official OERI position or policy.

LES VOIX DU ZAIRE

VOICES FROM ZAIRE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ZAIRE



KEY:	
⊙	Capital city
□	Capital of province
•	Major town
—	Provincial boundary
—	National boundary
—	River

Table des Matières Contents

Titre – Title	Page – Page	Langue – Language
FACT BOX	3	
INTRODUCTION	4	
SOUVENIRS DU ZAIRE – MEMORIES OF ZAIRE		
Ma maison – My house	6	Français – French
A la fête de mon ami au Zaïre – My friend's party in Zaïre	7	Français – French
Mabanza ya Zaïre – Memories of Zaïre	8	Kikongo
Mon jardin – My garden	9	Français – French
Moi et ma famille – Myself and my family	10	Français – French
LA VIE AU ZAIRE – LIFE IN ZAIRE		
Mon école au Zaïre – My school in Zaïre	11	Français – French
L'école – School	12	Français – French
La journée de l'Indépendance au Zaïre – Independence day in Zaïre	13	Français – French
Les affaires – Business	13	Français – French
OPPRESSION ET GUERRE – OPPRESSION AND WAR		
Les conflits au Zaïre – Fighting in Zaïre	14	Français – French
Makambu ya Zaïre – The situation in Zaïre	15	Kikongo
La prison au Zaïre – Prison in Zaïre	16	Français – French
Les compagnies d'investissement au Zaïre – Investment companies in Zaïre	17	Français – French
Des problèmes au Zaïre – Problems in Zaïre	18	Français – French
MA VIE – MY LIFE	19	Français – French
DEPART DU ZAIRE – LEAVING ZAIRE		
Départ pour la Belgique – Leaving for Belgium	27	Français – French
Mon mari s'enfuit du Zaïre – My husband flees Zaïre	28/29	Français – French
Voyage pour l'Angleterre – Journey to England	30	Français – French
ARRIVEE EN ANGLETERRE – ARRIVING IN ENGLAND		
La cabine téléphonique – The telephone box	31	Français – French
LA VIE EN GRANDE-BRETAGNE – LIFE IN ENGLAND		
A l'école à Londres – At school in London	33	Français – French
L'interrogation écrite – The test	34	Français – French
L'apprentissage de l'anglais – Learning English	35	Français – French
Solitude – Loneliness	35	Français – French
Je viens du Zaïre – I came from Zaïre	36	Français – French
ETRE REFUGIE – BEING A REFUGEE		
L'histoire des réfugiés – Refugee story	37	Français – French
Une lettre au pays – A letter home	38	Français – French
ESPOIR POUR L'AVENIR – HOPES FOR THE FUTURE		
Ndoto na ngayi mpo na ntango ekoya na Zaïre – My dreams for the future of Zaïre	39	Lingala
Espoir pour l'avenir – Hopes for the future	39	Français – French
L'avenir – The future	40	Français – French

VOICES FROM ZAIRE

Edited by Rachel Warner (Head of Education, Minority Rights Group)

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to:

- The many Zairean refugees who have contributed their experiences so openly to this book; members of the Zairean community in London who have offered their invaluable assistance to this project – Sana Bumba (Refugee Worker, Barnardos), Victor Mukolo (COREZAG), Manuela Manun'Ebo (Islington Zairean Refugee Group), Felix Matu, Dr Jean Mayala (Language Support Service, Barking and Dagenham), Jean-Pierre Semi (ZACA), and Margaret Burr, Carrie Cable (Language and Achievement Project Merton), Sheila Kasabova (Camden Language and Support Service), Cheryl Law, Sheila Melzak (Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture) and Jill Rutter (Refugee Council).
- The teachers who have helped collect the autobiographical writing in the book – Wilma Condie and Hilary Coombes (Harrow Language Service for Bilingual Pupils), Ann Cowie (Lambeth College), David Davies (George Orwell School), Anne Hutton (Highbury Fields School), Elizabeth Johnson (Sarah Bonnell School), Vasant Mahandru and Ann Winch (Language and Curriculum Access Service, Enfield), Sue Horton-Smith and Charlotte Franson (Twickenham);
- Anne Bouvier, Brian Morrison, Timothy Oliver, Alan Phillips, Patricia Sellick and Doug Soutar for their help at Minority Rights Group;
- CAFOD, Carlton Television Trust, City Parochial Foundation, London Boroughs Grants Unit, the Mercers' Company, Oxfam EC Mini-Project Scheme, Save the Children and the TSB Foundation for England and Wales for financial assistance;
- Dr Jean Mayala for translation.



Note to teachers

These autobiographical accounts by Zairean refugees were collected in both English and French by English as a Second Language teachers in London schools and members of the Zairean community in London. Most stories were written but a few were oral accounts. They were then translated into either French, Lingala or Kikongo (some stories, if they were written or given in French, were translated into English for editing, and then the edited version translated back into French). The French was translated by a Zairean speaker of French. The contributor chose the language they wanted their story translated into. An editorial decision was made to correct the English where necessary, without losing the flavour of the original account. All contributors checked their edited accounts before inclusion and members of the Zairean community checked the book – including the introduction and fact box and map – at all stages of its production.

Suggested uses of Voices from Zaire

The variation in complexity and length of the accounts makes *Voices from Zaire* very suitable for use at different Key Stages (KS2, 3 and 4), although it will be most useful at Key Stages 3 and 4. It will be a valuable resource for English teachers encouraging autobiographical writing at KS2, 3 and 4. It can also be used to fulfil the requirement that pupils read texts 'with challenging subject matter that broadens perspectives and extends thinking' and 'texts drawn from a variety of cultures and traditions' (English KS2) and 'read texts from other cultures and traditions that represent their distinctive voices and forms, and offer varied perspectives and subject matter' (English KS3 and 4).

In Geography at both KS2 and KS3 pupils can study a locality/country in Africa. In any study of Zaire, *Voices from Zaire* could be used as a secondary source of evidence. It could also be used to support any study of the causes of migration (KS3).

In French, *Voices from Zaire* could be used for cultural awareness where pupils are

being given opportunities to work with 'authentic materials... from the communities of the target language', compare their own culture 'with the cultures of the countries and communities where the target language is spoken' and 'identify with the experiences and perspectives of people in these countries and communities'. It could also be used for studying Areas of Experience C (The world around us) and E (The international world).

(All references are to The National Curriculum, published January 1995.)

As the book raises issues of human rights, being a refugee and living in a multicultural society, it is a useful resource for the Cross Curricular theme of Education for Citizenship, particularly to support the components 'A Pluralist Society' and 'Being a Citizen'.

Voices from Zaire, as a dual-text resource, will meet a pressing need for relevant materials to use with Zairean students and so will be invaluable for English as a Second Language teachers at both school and adult education level, and also for community language teachers working with Zairean students.

Specific suggestions for activities using the material in *Voices from Zaire* (along with *Voices from Angola, Sudan and Uganda*) are to be found in the accompanying Activities leaflet.

Cover Photo: A young banana seller near Matadi, Bas Zaire province © P Maitre/Gamma
Back Cover Photo Credit:
(John McCarthy) Helen Stone
Designed and typeset by Wave Design
Printed in the UK on bleach-free paper

© Minority Rights Group 1995

ISBN 1 897693 11 7

Voices from Zaire forms part of the education pack, *African Voices*, which also includes *Voices from Angola, Voices from Sudan and Voices from Uganda*.

Teachers may reproduce material in this pack for classroom use, but no part of it may be reproduced in any form, for commercial purposes without the prior express permission of Minority Rights Group.

Minority Rights Group

Minority Rights Group was founded in the 1960s. Its principal aim is to secure justice for minority (and non-dominant majority) groups suffering discrimination by:

- Researching, publishing and distributing the facts as widely as possible to raise public knowledge and awareness of minority issues worldwide;

- Advocating and publicising all aspects of the human rights of minorities, to draw attention to violations and to aid the prevention of dangerous and destructive conflicts;

- Educating, through its research, publications and schools programme on issues relating to prejudice, discrimination and group conflicts.

ZAIRE FACTBOX

Population: 41 million (1993 estimate)

Capital: Kinshasa

Head of state: President Mobutu Sese Seko, who seized power in a bloodless coup on 24 November 1965

Former colonial power: Belgium (before independence, the country was known as the Belgian Congo)

Date of independence: 30 June 1960

Main languages: French is the official language. Four Bantu languages, each spoken by millions of people, are used in certain regions as a lingua franca:

- Lingala (in and around Kinshasa and along the Zaire river in the north and north-west, also the army's recognised language);
- Kiswahili (in the east and north-east along the borders with Tanzania and Uganda) – the main dialect of Kiswahili spoken in Zaire is Kingwana;
- Kikongo (in Bas Zaire and Bandundu);
- Tshiluba (in Kasai Occidental and Kasai Oriental and elsewhere in the south and south-east).

More than 200 other languages and dialects are spoken. Most of these are Bantu languages, but there are some Nilo-Hamitic languages in the north and north-east.

Main religions: 47% Roman Catholic; 28% Protestant. Remainder mainly traditional religions. Muslims (Kindu Manyema) total only about 1% of the population, but are highly concentrated in the north-east, near the border with Sudan.

GNP per head: approx \$225 (1991) UK \$16,080 (1991) Zaire's political troubles have reduced its economy to a state of chaos. The distribution of wealth is highly uneven: a small, powerful elite enjoys a high standard of living, while the vast majority live below the poverty line.

Currency: Nouveau zaïre (NZ) introduced October 1993 to replace the zaïre.

Main exports: Diamonds are now the only significant source of export income. Severe political instability and a consequent lack of investment have damaged former export industries, particularly copper, which until the early 1990s was Zaire's main export earner. Most of the copper mines (located chiefly in Shaba province) are now closed and lack of maintenance has resulted in many becoming flooded. Similar problems have decimated Zaire's exports of other metals and minerals, such as cobalt, zinc, tin, silver, gold, manganese, uranium and tungsten. Other commodities exported in recent years have included crude oil, coffee, cocoa, rubber, timber and palm oil, though in each case exports have fallen dramatically or ceased altogether.

Infant mortality rate: 95 per 1,000 (1991) UK: 7 per 1,000 (1991)

Life expectancy: Men: 51.2 years; women: 54.4 years (average of recent estimates)
UK: Men 73.1 years; women: 78.8 years (average of recent estimates)

Adult (15+) literacy rate: 68.8% (1990) Men: 81.6%; women: 55.7% UK: 99.1% (average of recent estimates)

Glossaire

Note: ce glossaire est destiné à expliquer des expressions utilisées au Zaïre ou des mots anglais difficiles à traduire.

Ils apparaissent dans le texte marqués d'un astérisque.

Il ne vise qu'à faciliter la compréhension du texte.

s'approprier: Se préparer

B Tech: Diplôme d'enseignement technique

chanson avec scénettes: Chanson dont on mime l'action comme une petite pièce de théâtre

college: Mot anglais qui décrit en général une école d'enseignement supérieur. Parfois il peut aussi s'agir d'une école secondaire ou d'un institut de formation pour adultes

DSS (Department of Social Security): La Sécurité Sociale

cossette de manioc: Morceau de manioc qui a été trempé dans de l'eau pendant un ou plusieurs jours, puis qu'on a fait sécher afin de pouvoir le commercialiser.

l'écritoire: Tout ce qui sert à écrire. Cela peut être un stylo à bille, un stylo feutre, un crayon à papier.

le fufu: Pâte fabriquée à partir de farine de manioc

le Home Office: Le Ministère de l'Intérieur

le Council for Refugees: Le Conseil britannique pour les réfugiés: l'autorité qui prête assistance aux demandeurs d'asile et aux réfugiés.

SAL (Standard Acknowledgement Letter): Lettre remise au demandeur d'asile pendant que son dossier est à l'étude. Cette lettre lui permet de rester dans un pays d'accueil en attendant d'obtenir le statut de réfugié.

Introduction for teachers

Zaireans in Britain

There are between 5,000 and 10,000 Zaireans living in Britain, although many more have applied for asylum. In 1991, Zaireans were the largest group of refugees entering Britain, with over 7,000 applications for asylum. The vast majority of Zaireans live in the Greater London area, though there are small Zairean communities in Birmingham and Manchester.

Until the late 1980s few Zaireans applied for asylum in Britain. As many Zaireans speak French, they have tended to travel to France or Belgium (the former colonial power, with which Zaire has close links). However, those refugees who flee from conflict in Shaba province (which has escalated sharply since 1992), travel via Zambia, which has more flights to London than to Brussels or Paris. There are allegations that Zaireans in France and Belgium have been kidnapped by the Zairean intelligence service, the SIE, and forcibly returned to Zaire. Many Zaireans also believe racial harassment to be worse in France and Belgium than in Britain.

Zairean people seeking asylum in Britain often face harsher treatment than many other nationalities. A greater proportion are detained on arrival than other refugee groups. Few Zaireans arriving in Britain speak English, and by no means all speak fluent French (fluency in French depends on the number of years spent in school). Most enter Britain on false passports, which they have been forced to buy in order to leave Zaire. Dozens of Zairean asylum-seekers have been held in detention in Britain, some for many months. Almost all (about 99 per cent) of Zairean asylum-seekers are now refused, with large numbers returned to Zaire, where failed emigrants are routinely detained and often tortured on their re-entry, the Zairean authorities view the act of claiming asylum as evidence of dissent.

Most adult Zaireans in Britain are young and well-educated. A large majority hold out hopes of returning to Zaire, though not until the repressive regime of President Mobutu and his allies comes to an end.

(MRG is grateful for the assistance of The Refugee Council in compiling this section, which is partly based on its factsheet *Zairean refugees in the UK*, October 1993.)

Zaire since independence

Zaire (formerly known at different times as Congo and Belgian Congo) was a Belgian colony from 1908 until 1960, when it gained independence. The name Zaire was not adopted until 1971. The newly independent country soon suffered a mutiny by the immensely powerful army, together with the police force. Discord between several of the large number of ethnic groups intensified during the early 1960s. Despite UN intervention aimed at unifying the new nation, it soon split along regional lines, with the mineral-rich province of Katanga (now known as Shaba) breaking away to set up its own government.

In November 1965 army chief General Mobutu seized power, with support from the USA and the West, which viewed him as a bulwark against communism. The Mobutu regime reduced the influence of ethnic and regional forces through fierce repression and unbridled corruption. Mobutu fostered a personality cult and, by regular reshuffles and dismissals of leading figures in the government, civil service and army, ensured for many years that no one was able to mount a serious threat to his continued dominance and despotic rule.

By the late 1980s Zaire's economic plight was worsening, fuelling social tensions and increasing pressure on President Mobutu to introduce multi-party democracy. In April 1990 Mobutu announced plans to do so, and appointed a transitional government. More than 300 political parties were soon formed. In August 1991 Mobutu set up a national conference – intended to draft a new constitution, and in October he accepted an opposition-dominated government under a new Prime Minister, Etienne Tshisekedi.

Deadlock soon resulted, as Mobutu responded to increasingly overt challenges to his system of rule with a backlash against the opposition. After less than a month he replaced Tshisekedi's government with one dominated by the former ruling party, the *Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution* (MPR). Political chaos ensued, with two rival governments in place, as the Tshisekedi administration refused to step down. In June 1994 a new transitional government was formed, with the centrist opposition leader Kengo wa Dondo as Prime Minister. Tshisekedi and his UDPS party (*Union pour la Démocratie et la Progrès Social*) have refused to participate in this government, arguing that it lacks legitimacy.

Despite Mobutu's promises, Zaire remains a long way from democracy. The President's determination to retain power at all costs has led to even greater repression. His security forces commit human rights abuses on a huge scale, and his country remains economically crippled and diplomatically isolated.

Zairean Society Population

Zaire's population of 41 million is composed largely of Bantu groups, with minorities of Sudanese in the north, Nilotes in the north-east and pygmies and Hamites in the east. The country is home to more than 200 ethnic groups. The main ones include the Kongo (who number approximately 6 million and live mostly in Bas Zaire and Bandundu province in western Zaire), the Luba (approximately 7 million, concentrated in south-east Zaire), and the Mongo (approximately 5 million, who live in central and north-eastern areas). Other sizeable groups include the peoples of the Kwango-Kwilu, Lulua, Songe, Zande, Lunda, Nyanga, Hunde, Gallas, Chokwe, Bemba, Alur, Baka (pygmies), Tetala, Bangala and Ngombe. Almost 4 million members of Sudanese ethnic groups (such as Azande, Mangbetu, Ngbandi and Ngbaka) inhabit the north-east. Zambian and Angolan minorities also live in Zaire, as do longstanding migrants of Rwandan descent (Banyarwanda). In recent years many refugees from the conflicts in Burundi and Rwanda have crossed into Zaire.

Zaire is a fertile country, with much striking scenery. Its multitude of ethnic groups makes its culture very diverse. Traditional arts and crafts flourish in many areas, and the range and standard of Zairean music is among the most outstanding in Africa.

About 70 per cent of the population live in rural areas. The capital, Kinshasa, is by far the largest city, with about 3 million residents. At least 80 per cent of Zaire's people live below the poverty line. Food supplies are scarce, particularly in Kinshasa. Zaire once had several thriving industries, particularly copper-mining, but diamond sales are now the only significant source of export earnings and President Mobutu takes much of this income to boost his own vast personal fortune and finance his private army, the 20,000-strong Special Presidential Division. Corruption is rife. Very little is spent on health care, and transport links are poor.

Education

Education is largely financed by church and missionary organisations. The Catholic Church is still responsible for the majority of schools, despite the regime's policy of 'Zaireanisation' (increased Zairean control). Austerity measures since the early 1980s have led to enormous cuts in government spending on education. Most schools in Zaire have only basic equipment.

Primary education starts at six years, though many pupils enrol later. Many students miss years of their education, and about 30 per cent are never able to attend, either through family circumstances or through a lack of provision in their area. Classes typically have around 40 pupils. More boys than girls attend school; girls are often kept at home to help with household tasks. Less than a quarter of Zairean pupils go on to secondary education, which starts at around the age of 12.

All teaching is carried out in French at both primary and secondary level, though many schools also teach local languages. It is not uncommon for Zairean boys and girls to speak French, one of Zaire's four main regional languages (Lingala, Kiswahili, Kikongo and Tshiluba), and a local language as well.

Human rights abuses

At first it seemed as if President Mobutu's announcement in 1990 of plans for political reform could herald an end to more than 20 years of his repressive rule. In practice, though, Mobutu and his allies in Zaire have blocked all reforms that would loosen his hold on power, and have responded with even greater brutality. The security forces operate with impunity, and the regime is using the worsening political and economic situation as an excuse for appalling human rights abuses against opposition movements and certain ethnic groups.

The regime has ordered or condoned the killings of tens of thousands of people by the army and police. Rapes, assaults, looting sprees and destruction of property by the security forces are routine occurrences. Troops often open fire on unarmed demonstrators. Huge numbers of bodies are secretly disposed of in mass graves.

Typical targets include members of political parties opposed to Mobutu, members of ethnic groups which the regime seeks to exterminate, labour activists, journalists and independent newspapers,

independent lawyers, religious leaders, and students, as well as soldiers suspected of sympathy with Mobutu's opponents. Many go into hiding, fearing for their lives. Political opponents are often abducted and illegally detained before being murdered. Conditions in prisons and detention camps can be barbaric. Many prisoners are sexually assaulted, flogged, given electric shocks or otherwise tortured. Large numbers die from starvation or from lack of medical attention.

Persecution of ethnic minorities

Zaire's large number of ethnic groups have long competed for scarce resources. The political instability of recent years has fuelled intercommunal tensions. The regime has incited civilian attacks against ethnic groups which do not support President Mobutu. Several officials have spoken openly of the need to 'exterminate' such races.

The security forces turn a blind eye to attacks against these groups and often themselves instigate violence, even providing the attackers with weapons. This is particularly the case in the regions of Shaba and North Kivu, where thousands of people have been killed and hundreds of thousands forced to leave their homes and livelihoods.

Shaba

In Shaba (Katanga) province, in south-east Zaire, members of the Lunda ethnic group have carried out extensive attacks since 1992 against Luba people from the adjacent Kasai region. Prominent Lunda allies of President Mobutu have openly encouraged the violence, calling for ethnic purification of the province.

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Kasai Luba people in Shaba have been killed. Well over 100,000 have been forced out of their homes, most of which have been destroyed or burned. Huge numbers have fled northwards to Kasai or west across the border into Angola. Most Luba people in Shaba settled in the region as migrant mine workers from the provinces of Kasai Oriental and Kasai Occidental (East and West Kasai), many before Zaire's independence. These Luba 'immigrants' in Shaba have been dismissed from their jobs and expelled or detained in camps where many have died of dysentery, cholera or starvation.

North Kivu

The government recently split Kivu province in eastern Zaire into three: North

Kivu, South Kivu and Maniema. However these divisions are not recognised by many Kivu people.

The Nyanga and Hunde peoples of North Kivu have carried out a sustained campaign of violence since 1993 against local Zairean residents of Rwandan descent (known as Banyarwanda). There were around 2 million Banyarwanda in North Kivu, many of whom came to Zaire as refugees from repeated ethnic disturbances in Rwanda from 1959 onwards; others entered as migrant labourers before then. The campaign was reportedly ordered by the Nyanga and Hunde traditional chiefs to suppress Banyarwanda attempts to gain influence over community affairs. Disputes over land rights in the area also fuelled tensions.

The regime, whose forces had clashed since early 1992 with Banyarwanda rebels, particularly in the north-eastern part of North Kivu near the Ugandan border, has exploited local resentment against the Banyarwanda. Around 10,000 Banyarwanda have been killed and perhaps 200,000 displaced since the Nyanga and Hunde began their campaign. Many have fled into Uganda. Members of the security forces have taken part in many of the attacks and have provided the Nyanga and Hunde with firearms. Troops have killed unarmed civilians, raped women, set villages on fire and looted property.

Lower-level violence is taking place against Banyarwanda in the neighbouring regions of South Kivu and Maniema. Some Banyarwanda have staged counter-attacks, killing and injuring Nyanga, Hunde and other ethnic groups.

About this book

This book contains the voices of Zairean refugees, most of whom are students at schools and colleges in London. They have experienced traumatic events and have had their lives enormously changed by their decision – or their parents' decision – to leave their homeland. It is to their credit that they feel able to share some of these experiences with us, through this book. Many wait and hope for an end to the years of repression in Zaire, so that one day it will be safe for them to return and rebuild their country.

Marcus Turner

Independent consultant specialising in international politics and economics.
March 1995

SOUVENIRS DU ZAIRE MEMORIES OF ZAIRE

FRENCH

Ma maison

Au Zaïre nous habitons dans une grande maison. Il y avait six pièces: une salle-à-manger – salon, une cuisine, trois chambres à coucher et une salle de bain.

A côté de la maison, il y avait un grand manguier. Nous avions l'habitude d'aller nous asseoir dessous. Devant la maison il y avait un petit jardin garni de légumes. Quelquefois nous allions y récolter des arachides.

C'était vraiment bien pour nous au Zaïre.

Ecrit par Mangenga Motondo, une fille de 12 ans, élève à l'école Highbury Fields, Islington, Londres.

My house

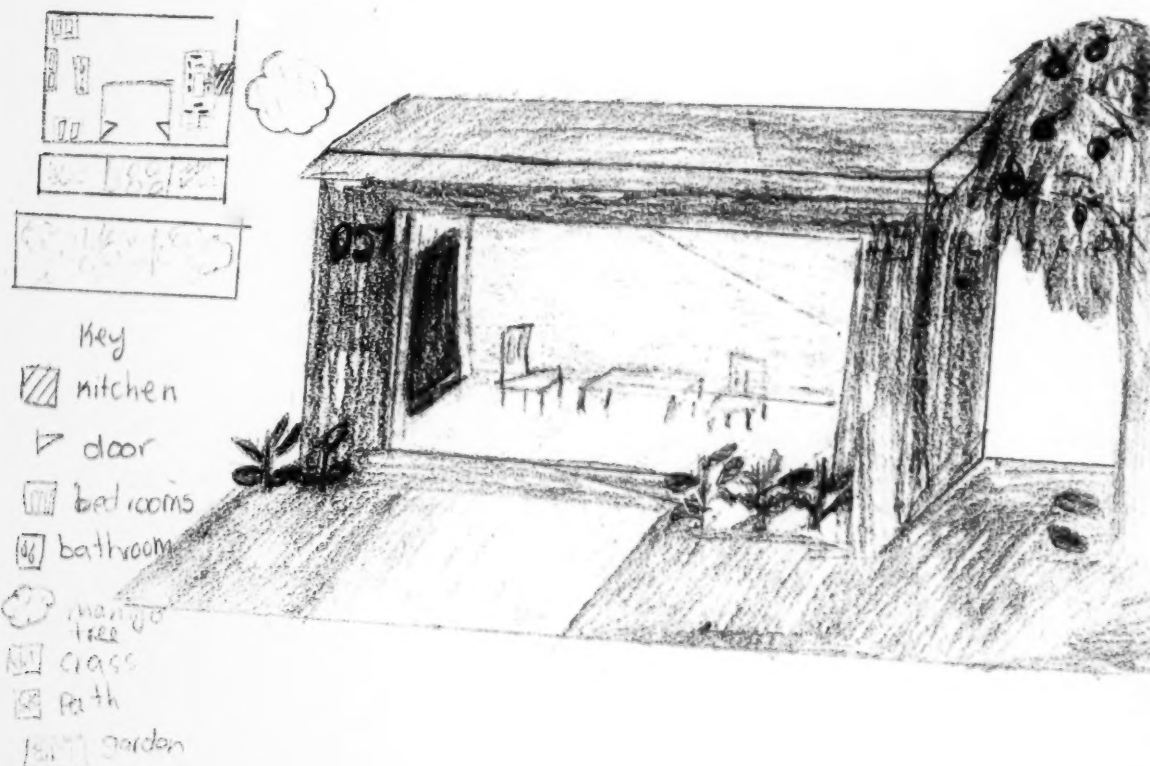
In Zaïre we lived in a big house. There were five rooms in the house, one for the dining room and living room, one for the kitchen, three bedrooms and a bathroom.

Next to the house there was a big mango tree. We often used to go and rest underneath. In front of the house there was a little garden with lots of vegetables. Sometimes we used to go and collect the peanuts.

We really liked our house.

Written by Mangenga Motondo, a 12 year old girl at Highbury Fields School, Islington, London. This account was written originally in French.

My house in Zaïre, drawn by Mangenga Motondo





After the party, drawn by Moni Nsiawete

FRENCH

A la fête de mon ami au Zaïre

Quand je suis allé à la fête de mon ami au Zaïre, nous avons joué à la balle. Nous avons joué dans son jardin. Il n'y avait pas de pelouse mais du sable. Et dans l'après-midi nous avons pris un repas bien préparé. Mon ami avait sept ans.

Et j'ai passé la nuit chez lui. Aucun autre enfant n'a passé la nuit là-bas. J'ai dormi dans son grand lit. Le lendemain matin nous avons pris le déjeuner. Ce n'était pas la même nourriture qu'ici. C'était chaud. C'était délicieux. Dans l'après-midi je suis rentré à la maison. Ma maison était non loin de celle de mon ami. Mon père me demanda: "T'es-tu bien amusé à la fête?" J'ai répondu: "Oui, papa, c'était bien."

Ecrit par Moni Nsiawete, un garçon de 10 ans, élève à l'école Stanburn First, Harrow, Middlesex.

My friend's party in Zaïre

When I was at my friend's party in Zaïre we played football. We played in his garden. It was not grass – it was sandy. Then in the afternoon we ate some cooked dinner. My friend was seven. Then I slept at his house. None of the other children slept there. I slept in his big bed. Then the next morning we had breakfast. It is not the same food as here. It is hot. It is delicious. In the afternoon I went back home. My house was near my friend's house. My dad asked, 'Did you enjoy the party?' I said, 'Yes, dad, it was good.'

Written by Moni Nsiawete, a 10 year old boy at Stanburn Middle School, Harrow, Middlesex.

Mabanza Ya Zaire

Bima ya mono ikele zolaka mingi na Zaire ikele ntangu, madia, nzo na mono ti banduku ya mono bikisaka kuna.

Ntangu na Zaire ikele bilumbu nyonso kitoko ti tiya. Madia ya Zaire ikele kitoko mingi. Bima ya mono ikele kuwa nzala na yo mingi ikele bambuma bonso nsafu ti payi-payi. Na masamba na beto na nzo beto vandaka ti banti ya nsafu, banti ya mankondo, banti ya malala ya ngani, masamba ya tomatu ti banti ya avoka. Mono ikele yindulaka diaka nsungi ya nsafu vandaka kutela beto vandaka kubuka yo. Beto vandaka kudia yo mingi, kansi yonso ve. Yo lutaka mingi. Ya nkaka mpi vandaka kepola.

Kansi mono mpi ikele na mabanza ya mbi ya Zaire. Sambu na kuzinga bantu mingi vandaka kuyiba. Bo ta kwisa na mpimpa na ntangu ya beno ikele kulala sambu na kuyiba bima na beno. Mono vandaka kutita mingi na kulala na nzo na beto sambu na bamiyibi. Ngemba vandaka ve, mono vandaka kusosa kaka ntangu kutana nswalu.

Muntu sonikaka yo ikele Linda Mayala, mwana nkento ya mvula kumi na tanu, yandi ikele longoki na nzonkanda, na Dagenham, Essex.

Memories of Zaire

The things I like best about Zaire are the weather, the food, my house and the friends I have left behind.

The weather in Zaire is always very nice and hot. The food in Zaire is just wonderful. The things I really miss are fruits such as mango and papaya. In my garden back home we used to have mango trees, banana trees, lemon trees, tomato plants and avocado trees. I remember us picking mangoes when the season came for the fruits to be ready. We ate most of them, but not all. There were too many. Some of them even used to go bad.

But I also have bad memories of Zaire. People used to steal things to survive. They came to your house at night while you were sleeping to steal your belongings. I didn't feel safe sleeping in my own home because I was always scared of burglars coming. There was no security and I couldn't wait until the night was over.

Written by Linda Mayala, a 15 year old girl at secondary school in Dagenham, Essex.

My garden, drawn by Linda Mayala





My house and garden in Zaïre, drawn by the author of 'My garden'

FRENCH

Mon jardin

Dans le jardin de ma maison au Zaïre nous avons des pommiers, des poiriers et des fraisières. Nous avons deux jolis perroquets et l'un d'eux pouvait imiter les aboiements du chien. Ils étaient méchants et déchiraient nos chaussures quand nous les laissions dehors. J'avais l'habitude d'aller à la pêche avec mon papa et mon frère Dudu, mais nous retournions toujours à l'eau les poissons que nous attrapions. Mon frère Dudu et ma soeur Danti sont encore au Zaïre. Je me sens très proche de Dudu parce qu'il est mon frère jumeau et quelquefois je pleure parce que je l'aime et qu'il me manque.

Écrit par un garçon de 9 ans, élève à l'école primaire de Enfield, Middlesex. Ceci est un récit oral fait à son maître.

My garden

In the garden of our house in Zaïre we had apple trees, pear trees and strawberries. We had two beautiful parrots and one of them could copy the barking of a dog. They were naughty and bit our shoes into small pieces if we left them out. I used to go fishing with my dad and my brother Dudu, but we always put the fish that we caught back into the water. My brother Dudu and my sister Danti are still in Zaïre. I am very close to Dudu because he is my twin and sometimes I cry because I love him and miss him.

By a 9 year old boy at primary school in Enfield, Middlesex. This was an oral account given to his teacher.

Moi et ma famille

Je m'appelle Francine. Mobutu, le président du Zaïre, avait dit en 1971 que plus personne ne pouvait porter de nom chrétien, ainsi mon nom officiel zairois est Namabobo. Mais mes amis continuent à m'appeler Francine.

Je suis née dans la ville de Kikwit dans la province de Bandundu. Je suis de la tribu Yansi et ma langue maternelle est le kiyansi. Je parle aussi le kikongo, le lingala, le français et un peu d'anglais.

Mon père avait six femmes et 28 enfants. Je vivais dans une grande maison à Kikwit avec tous les autres enfants, mon père et sa première femme. Ma propre mère ainsi que les autres femmes vivaient dans leurs maisons à la cité, mais je visitais ma mère régulièrement.

Mon père était commerçant: il achetait et revendait des marchandises. Kikwit est le principal producteur de fufu* (cossettes de manioc*). Mon père amenait du fufu* à Kinshasa, la capitale du Zaïre, pour le vendre. Le revenu des ventes lui permettait d'acheter de la bière et du poisson salé au retour de Kinshasa. Il ramenait les marchandises à Kikwit et ensuite il les revendait aux commerçants et aux vendeurs du marché.

Écrit par Francine Songo, une Zairoise vivant à Ilford, Essex. Ceci est un récit oral fait en français. Vous pourrez trouver d'autres extraits de son histoire aux pages 12, 13, 28 et 40.

Myself and my family

My name is Francine. Mobutu, the President of Zaïre, said in 1971 no-one should have Christian names so my official Zaïrean name is Namabobo. But my friends still call me Francine.

I was born in the town of Kikwit in the province of Bandundu. I am from the Yanzi tribe and my first language is Kiyansi. I also speak Kikongo, Lingala, French and some English.

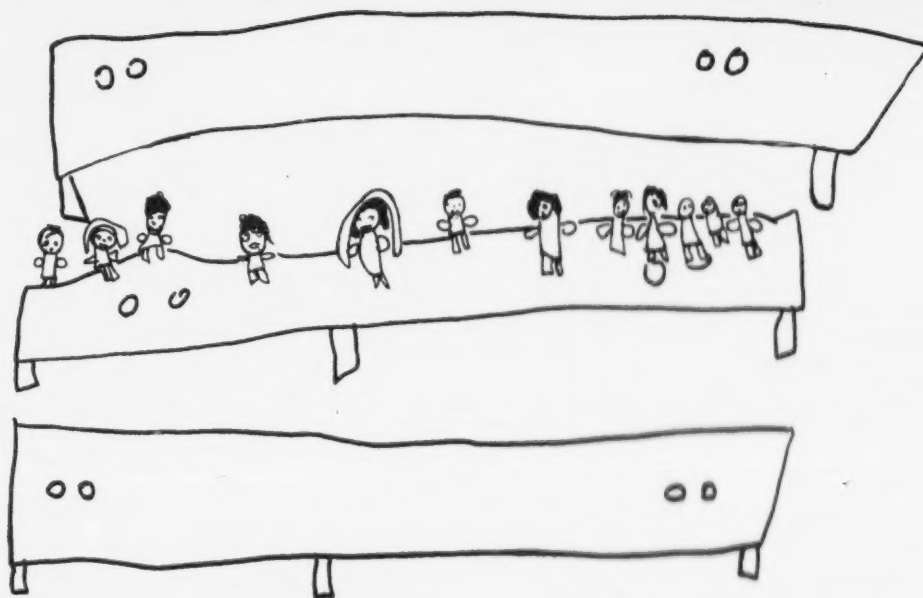
My father had six wives and 28 children. I lived in a big house in Kikwit with all the other children, and my father and his first wife. My own mother and the other wives lived in their own houses in the town, but I saw my mother regularly.

My father was a trader – he bought and sold things. Kikwit is the main producer of fufu (a powdered food made from dried cassava). So my father took fufu to Kinshasa, the capital of Zaïre, and sold it there. With the money he bought beer and salt fish in Kinshasa. He took the goods back to Kikwit, and then sold it to shopkeepers and market stall holders for them to sell.

By Francine Songo, a Zaïrean woman living in Ilford, Essex. This was an oral account given in French. Some more of her story is on pages 12, 13, 29 and 40.

LA VIE AU ZAIRE

LIFE IN ZAIRE



In my classroom, drawn by Claudia Nsiawete

FRENCH

Mon école au Zaïre

La première porte en entrant à mon école était peinte en bleu clair. Ma mère m'accompagnait à l'école. Il y avait autant de garçons que de filles dans mon école. Nous étions très calmes. Nous ne parlions pas en classe comme ici. Nous nous asseyions sur un long banc avec un autre surélevé qui nous servait de table. Environ douze enfants pouvaient s'asseoir sur chaque banc. Nous mangions aussi là-bas. Quand je voulais quelque chose à boire, on me donnait du lait. J'ai laissé ma bouteille d'école au Zaïre.

Je portais une tunique et une blouse. Mon frère aussi portait l'uniforme. Il portait des culottes grises.

Nous avions un terrain de jeux fait en ciment avec un gros arbre au bout. Nous chantions des chansons avec scénettes* telles que "La Tambourette".

Ecrit par Claudia Nsiawete, une fille de 7 ans, élève à l'école Stanburn First, Harrow, Middlesex. Ceci est un récit oral fait à son maître.

My school in Zaïre

The first door coming into my school was light blue. My mum took me to school. There were boys and girls at my school. We were very quiet. We didn't speak in the classroom, like here. We sat on a long bench with a higher bench in front to rest on. About 12 children sat on each bench. We ate there as well. When I wanted a drink I had milk. I left my school bottle in Zaïre.

I wore a tunic with a blouse. My brother had a uniform as well. He had grey shorts.

We had a playground made of concrete and one big tree at the side. We sang songs with actions like 'A la tambourette' (Like the drum).

By Claudia Nsiawete, a 7 year old girl at Stanburn First School, Harrow, Middlesex. This was an oral account given to her teacher.

L'école

Je suis allée à l'école à Kikwit. J'ai commencé l'école primaire quand j'avais six ans. Il y avait 40 enfants dans ma classe. Les maîtres étaient très stricts. Ils nous tapaient quand nous faisions des fautes. Tous les cours étaient en français. A l'école primaire on étudiait les mathématiques, le français, le kikongo, la géographie, l'histoire, les sciences, l'hygiène, l'éducation morale et civique. Mon sujet préféré était les mathématiques.

A l'école secondaire on étudiait aussi en français. Le système était basé sur le modèle éducatif belge (parce que le Zaïre était une colonie belge jusqu'en 1960). A l'école secondaire on étudiait l'anglais ainsi que d'autres sujets commencés à l'école primaire. Après deux ans à l'école secondaire, nous devions choisir une option: les sujets pour lesquels nous voulions nous spécialiser. Je voulais étudier les mathématiques et la physique mais cela n'était pas possible. L'école qui avait ces options était trop éloignée de ma localité et cela signifiait que j'aurais dû changer d'école. A la place j'ai dû étudier la pédagogie pour enseigner au niveau primaire bien que je n'aie pas voulu devenir enseignante. C'est un fait fréquent au Zaïre: le choix est souvent limité par ce qui est disponible.

Ecrit par Francine Songo, une Zaïroise vivant à Ilford, Essex. Ceci est un récit oral fait en français. Vous pourrez trouver d'autres extraits de son histoire aux pages 10, 13, 28 et 40.

School

I went to school in Kikwit. I started primary school when I was six. There were about 40 children in the class. The teachers were very strict. They beat us when we got things wrong. All the lessons were taught in French. At primary school we did maths, French, Kikongo, geography, history, science, hygiene, morals and civics. My favourite subject was maths.

At secondary school we also studied in French. The system was based on the Belgian education system (because Zaïre was ruled by Belgium until 1960). At secondary school we studied English as well as the subjects we had done at primary school. After two years in secondary school, we chose to do options – the subjects we wanted to specialise in. I really wanted to do maths and physics but it wasn't possible. The school that offered those subjects as special options was a long way from where we lived and I would have had to change to that school. So I had to do a pre-teaching course instead, for teaching in primary school, although I didn't want to be a teacher. That's common in Zaïre – to want to do things and end up just doing what's available.

By Francine Songo, a Zaïrean woman living in Ilford, Essex. This was an oral account given in French. Some more of her story is on pages 10, 13, 29 and 40.

A primary school class in Kinshasa



Dr. Mayala

La journée de l'Indépendance au Zaïre

L'une des grandes manifestations au Zaïre est la journée de l'Indépendance: le 30 juin. La journée de l'Indépendance était fériée à travers le pays. Je me souviens que lorsque j'étais à Kinshasa, ce jour-là beaucoup de gens et de soldats défilaient dans les rues. Beaucoup de gens assistaient aux cérémonies et les écoliers aussi y prenaient part. Les officiers de l'armée, les ministres ainsi que d'autres personnalités importantes prenaient place sur l'estrade. A l'arrivée du Président Mobutu, tout le monde sur l'estrade se levait et la fanfare militaire jouait l'hymne national du Zaïre pendant qu'on montait le drapeau du Zaïre. Tout le monde applaudissait. Les gens qui ne pouvaient pas y assister en personne suivaient les cérémonies à la télévision.

Ecrit par Bolombo Motondo, un garçon de 14 ans, élève à l'école George Orwell, Islington, Londres. Vous pourrez trouver d'autres extraits des écrits de Bolombo aux pages 27 et 38.

Les affaires

J'étais une femme d'affaires à Kinshasa. Beaucoup de femmes le font au Zaïre. Ma famille m'avait donné un peu d'argent pour démarrer. Voici ce que je faisais: Kinshasa est divisée en deux quartiers – la Ville et la Cité. La Ville est le centre et, à l'époque des Belges, c'était là où les Blancs résidaient. La Cité est là où vivaient les Africains. Tous les grands magasins étaient en Ville et cela est resté ainsi après le départ des Belges. J'achetais au comptant des habits pour femmes et des bijoux en Ville pour aller les revendre aux gens à la Cité. Ils me les payaient en plusieurs versements parce qu'ils ne pouvaient pas les acheter au comptant comme je le faisais.

J'étais une bonne femme d'affaires et je gagnais beaucoup d'argent. La seule façon de survivre au Zaïre est de faire des affaires.

Ecrit par Francine Songo, une Zaïroise vivant à Ilford, Essex. C'était un récit fait en français. Vous pourrez trouver d'autres extraits de son histoire aux pages 10, 12, 28 et 40.

Independence Day in Zaïre

One of the great festivals in Zaïre is the country's Independence Day on 30 June. Independence Day was a holiday in the country. I remember when I lived in Kinshasa, on that day lots of people and soldiers lined up in the streets. There were lots of people who went to see the celebrations and many school children also went. The army officers, ministers and other important people sat on the platform. When President Mobutu came, all the people on the platform stood up and the army band played the national anthem of Zaïre and then they raised the flag of Zaïre. Everyone clapped. People who didn't come were watching the celebration on television.

Written by Bolombo Motondo, a 14 year old boy at George Orwell School, Islington, London. Some more of Bolombo's writing is on pages 27 and 38.

Business

I was a business woman in Kinshasa. Lots of women do this in Zaïre. My family gave me some money to get started. What I did was this: Kinshasa is divided into two areas – called La Ville and Cité. La Ville is the centre and in Belgian times was where all the white people lived. Cité was where the African people lived. All the big, main shops were in La Ville and it's stayed like that even after the Belgians left. I bought women's clothes and jewellery in La Ville with cash and then sold them to people in Cité. They paid for them in instalments because they couldn't afford to pay for them all at once like I did.

I was a good business woman and made quite a lot of money. The only way to survive in Zaïre is to do business.

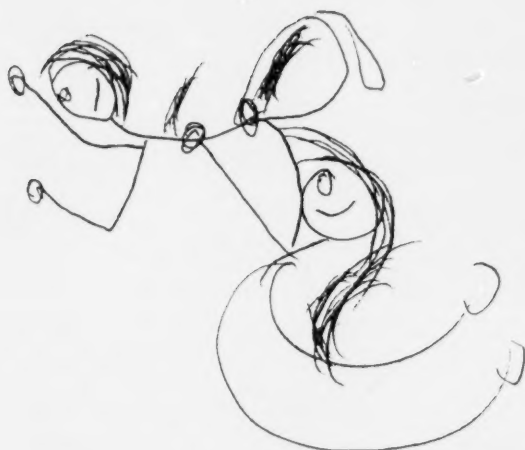
By Francine Songo, a Zaïrean woman living in Ilford, Essex. This was an oral account given in French. Some more of her story is on pages 10, 12, 29 and 40.

Business district, Kinshasa



John St Jenekiar/Impact

OPPRESSION ET GUERRE OPPRESSION AND WAR



People Fighting, drawn by Fabrisse Pikondo (age 5), Longfield First School, Harrow, Middlesex

Fighting in Zaïre

We had to leave Zaïre because it was very dangerous. My dad was frightened that we would be killed. Nearly every other day there was serious fighting in the towns and villages. People were punching and fighting in the shops to steal food and money. Soldiers were stealing and soldiers went into our school and stabbed a teacher for not giving money. I was scared to see people hurt and lying dead. I am so happy to be in England because there is no fighting here.

By a 9 year old Zairean boy at primary school in Enfield, Middlesex. This was an oral account given to his teacher.

FRENCH

Les conflits au Zaïre

Nous devions quitter le Zaïre parce que la situation devenait très dangereuse. Mon papa craignait que nous soyons tués. Presque tous les jours il y avait des troubles dans les villes et les villages. Les gens se battaient dans les magasins pour voler de la nourriture et de l'argent. Les soldats volaient et quand ils sont venus dans notre école ils ont blessé un enseignant à coups de couteau parce qu'il avait refusé de leur donner de l'argent. J'avais horreur de voir des gens blessés et étendus morts. Je suis si heureux d'être en Angleterre parce qu'on ne se bat pas ici.

Ecrit par un garçon de 9 ans, élève à l'école primaire de Enfield, Middlesex. Ceci est un récit oral fait à son maître.

Two boys in Kivu Province, holding a toy gun made from the stem of a banana tree



David Orr/Panos Pictures

Makambu ya Zaire

Makambu ya Zaire ikele mpasi mingi ata beto ikele kumona yo ve bonso bantu yina ikele kuzinga kuna na bwala.

Kiyeka ya mbongo ya bwala imene kulumuka na nsi penza. Bantu ikele kuzaba mpasi ya kiyeka ya mbongo ikele beto batu kele zinga na bwala banzenza. Bampangi na Zaire ikele tindila beto mikanda, kansi yo ikele kumina beto ntangu ya nkaka na nima ngonda tanu. Bantu ikele sonika na kuzabisa beto nde ntalu ya bima imene luta kiteso. Kansi bamfumu ya Zaire ikele na mbongo ya kusumba ti kunwa malafu ya mindele (champagne). Yina ikele songa nde bau ikele ti mawa ve.

Zaire imene kuma bwala mosi ya kuluta bunsukami na Afrika sambu na luzolo ya mbi ya mfumu ya bwala ti bilandi na yandi. Ba lopitalo ikele kuzwa bankisi ve ya kusansa ba fundu ya bambefo. Luzingu na Zaire imene kuma mpasi ya kuluta kiteso. Ba makesa ikele kubaka bima ya bantu na ngolo ti na muyibi.

Kusonika ya mwana nkento Christelle Pandanzila, mvula kumi na tatu, mulongoki na Dagenham, na Essex.



Chris Steele-Perkins/Magnum

Slum in Bukavu

The situation in Zaire

The present situation in Zaire is a very difficult one, although we do not feel it in the same way as the people who are in the country.

The country's currency has now been devalued to its lowest point. What follows is quite degrading for us. Members of my family who live in Zaire send us letters that sometimes arrive five months after they were written. People write to us to say that food prices are beyond reach, but the leaders of Zaire continue to drink champagne. This shows

how insensitive they are. Zaire has become the poorest country in Africa because of its president and ministers. Hospitals receive no medicines for their thousands of sick people. Life in Zaire is simply misery. The soldiers frequently go on the rampage and everything is obtained by violence.

Written by Christelle Pandanzila, a 13 year old girl at secondary school in Dagenham, Essex. This account was written originally in French.

Kinshasa, September 1991: people walk in a street devastated by riots which wrecked towns, emptied shelves and left more than 100 dead and 2000 injured



Gerard Fouet/Popperfoto/AFP

La prison au Zaïre

Je me rappelle du jour où j'ai été arrêtée avec mon mari au Zaïre. Je dormais tranquillement avec mes deux enfants. Vers deux heures du matin sept personnes ont forcé la porte et cela a réveillé mon mari. J'étais terrifiée, je ne pourrai jamais oublier ce que j'ai ressenti en cet instant. On nous a conduits quelque part laissant mes deux petits enfants seuls. La dernière fois que j'ai vu mon mari fut la nuit où nous avons été arrêtés ensemble. On nous a enfermés dans la même prison mais je n'étais pas autorisée à le voir. Deux mois plus tard j'appris de l'un de ses amis qu'il avait été tué en prison.

J'ai subi de très mauvais traitements en prison. Je n'avais rien à manger, rien à boire et

on me frappait tous les jours. Les gardiens me forçaient à chanter et à danser pour leur faire plaisir. Je ne pouvais pas me laver et j'étais enfermée dans une salle puante parce que je n'avais pas de toilettes. Quelqu'un m'a aidé à m'enfuir et c'est alors que j'ai appris que mon mari était mort en prison et que mes enfants étaient chez une amie. Je n'étais pas autorisée à les voir parce que je ne devais être vue de personne. Un ami de mon mari m'aida à sortir du Zaïre et je suis ici sans nouvelles de ma famille. Comme vous pouvez l'imaginer, c'est très dur pour moi.

Ecrit par une Zaïroise étudiante au college de Lambeth, Londres.*

Prison in Zaïre

I remember the day when I was arrested with my husband in Zaïre. I was sleeping quietly with my two children. Around 2 a.m., seven men broke the door down and my husband woke me up. I was so terrified, I can never forget what I felt at that moment. We were taken somewhere, leaving my little children alone. The last time I saw my husband was the night we were arrested together. We were put in the same prison but I was not allowed to see him. Two months later I heard from a friend of his that he had been killed in prison.

I was treated very badly in prison. I couldn't eat or drink and I was beaten every day. The guards forced me to dance and sing for them. I couldn't wash myself and I was kept in a bad smelling place because I couldn't use a toilet.

Someone helped me to escape and then I heard about the death of my husband and that my children were living at my friend's house. I wasn't allowed to meet them because I couldn't be seen by anyone. My husband's friend helped me to leave

Zaire and now I am here without news of my family. It's very hard, as you can imagine.

Written by a Zairean woman studying at Lambeth College, London.



The police beat people in Zaïre, drawn by Sheila Magengo Mbaticka (age 10)

Les compagnies d'investissement au Zaïre

En mai 1991 je travaillais pour le compte de l'une des compagnies d'investissement à court terme opérant au Zaïre. La compagnie pour laquelle je travaillais était située près de l'université et de l'Ecole Polytechnique à Kinshasa. Son but était de restaurer la confiance des étudiants parce qu'à l'époque les étudiants constituaient la principale force d'opposition au Président Mobutu. L'idée était que les étudiants puissent investir de l'argent dans notre compagnie et recevoir le double du montant deux jours plus tard. Au début la plupart des étudiants n'avaient pas d'argent pour investir, c'est ainsi que certains sont allés convaincre leurs parents de vendre des biens tels que lopins de terre ou véhicules pour obtenir de l'argent à investir.

Au début tout allait bien, nous étions satisfaits et tous étaient devenus millionnaires. Mais quatre mois plus tard, les choses commencèrent à mal tourner. Début juin 1991 le gouvernement ordonna la fermeture de toutes ces compagnies d'investissement. Je fus surpris de recevoir la visite des membres de la garde civile (la police fidèle à Mobutu). La police prit tout l'argent que nous gardions et je fus arrêté.

On m'a accusé d'être un traître et d'avoir propagé auprès des étudiants la rumeur selon laquelle le gouvernement était impliqué dans cette affaire. J'ai passé plus de 12 mois en prison sans être interrogé. Quelques temps après mon arrestation, la compagnie fut fermée et mon patron disparut. Je ne l'ai plus jamais revu. C'était pénible de travailler avec l'argent de gens qui ne pouvaient pas le récupérer. Après la fermeture des compagnies, les étudiants étaient très en colère et sont devenus dangereux: ils se mirent à tout détruire, à brûler des voitures, etc.

Trois jours après mon arrestation, le président zaïrois, Mobutu, est passé à la télévision et a déclaré que toutes ces compagnies d'investissement étaient des institutions privées et qu'elles n'avaient rien à voir avec le gouvernement. Il accusa les responsables des compagnies. Ensuite il ordonna la fermeture de toutes les universités du Zaïre. Les étudiants furent encore plus furieux et se mirent à la chasse de ceux qui travaillaient pour ces compagnies. S'ils vous attrapaient et que vous n'étiez pas en mesure

Investment companies in Zaïre

In May 1991 I was involved in one of several short term investment companies in Zaïre. The company I was involved with was based around the university and polytechnic of Kinshasa. Its purpose was to get back the trust of students because at that time students were the main opposition to President Mobutu. The idea was that students would invest money with our company and then after two days they would receive double the amount of money. Right at the beginning most of the students didn't have money to invest so some of them convinced their parents to sell things like land or cars in order to get money and start to invest.

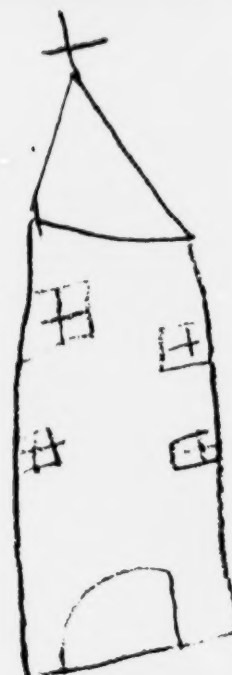
Right at the beginning everything moved well – we enjoyed it and all became millionaires. But four months later, things started to go wrong. At the beginning of June 1991 the government decided to close all those investment companies. I was surprised to see a lot of *garde civile* (pro Mobutu police) arrive. The police took all the money we were keeping and I was arrested.

I was accused of being a traitor and the one who spread the news among the students that the government was also involved in that business. I spent more than 12 months in prison without any interview. Just after my arrest the investment company was closed and my boss disappeared. I never saw him again. It was terrible to be dealing with other people's money and not be able to get it back. After the companies were closed the students became very angry and dangerous – they destroyed things, burned cars etc.

Three days after my arrest, the Zaïrean president, Mobutu, appeared on TV and said all



I remember seeing people meeting on TV. 'They won't find any solution to our problems,' my father said. Drawn by an 8 year old girl at primary school in Dagenham, Essex.



I remember people started praying a lot in Zaire, drawn by Francine (at infant school in Dagenham, Essex)

de leur rendre leur argent, ils vous tuaient. Si je n'avais pas été arrêté, je suis sûr que j'aurais été tué par les étudiants. De la prison j'ai reçu l'aide d'une organisation qui m'a aussi aidé à m'enfuir. Mais il y a eu beaucoup de victimes du côté des gens qui travaillaient pour ces compagnies d'investissement.

Ecrit par un étudiant au college de Lambeth, Londres.*

FRENCH

Des problèmes au Zaïre

J'aimais vivre au Zaïre mais il y avait toujours des problèmes. Quelquefois quand vous allez faire des achats, les commerçants envoient quelqu'un vous suivre jusque chez vous.

La nuit ils volent les marchandises et partent les revendre de nouveau dans le magasin. Ils le font tant pour les meubles que pour la nourriture. Si quelqu'un a fait des achats pour une semaine, les paquets non-ouverts sont repris pour être revendus.

Ecrit par Nanou Nseki, une fille de 12 ans, élève à l'école Sarah Bonnell, Newham, Londres. Vous pourrez trouver d'autres écrits de Nanou à la page 35.

the investment companies were private and nothing to do with the government. He blamed the chairmen of the companies. Then he closed all the universities in Zaire. The students got more and more angry, and started to look for people who were working in the investment companies. If they caught you and you couldn't give them their money back they would kill you. If I hadn't been arrested I'm sure I would have been killed by the students. In prison an organisation supported me and helped me to run away. But there are a lot of victims of the investment companies in Zaire.

Written by a student at Lambeth College, London.

Problems in Zaïre

I liked living in Zaire but there were problems. Sometimes when you went shopping the shopkeeper sent someone to follow you home. That night they would steal the things back and sell them in the shop again. This would happen with things like furniture or even with food. If a person has just bought a week's shopping the full packets would be taken back to sell again.

Written by Nanou Nseki, a 12 year old girl at Sarah Bonnell School, Newham, London. Some more of Nanou's writing is on page 35.

MA VIE MY LIFE

FRENCH

Ma famille

Je suis originaire de la province de Bandundu au Zaïre. Je suis né à Lusanga mais mes parents ont divorcé après ma naissance. C'est ainsi qu'on m'a envoyé vivre avec ma grand-mère et mon oncle à Kikwit, à environ 30 km de Lusanga. Selon ma tribu l'enfant appartient plus à la famille de sa mère, ainsi mon oncle était aussi important que mon père. Mon oncle avait un bon emploi, il était agronome (quelqu'un qui a étudié les sciences agricoles). Il payait tout pour moi.

Quand j'étais jeune ma mère me manquait et j'étais fâché contre elle pour m'avoir envoyé ailleurs. Maintenant je comprends mieux pourquoi elle l'avait fait. À l'école les autres enfants avaient l'habitude de parler de leurs parents disant par exemple: "Mon père a dit ceci, ma mère a dit cela". Je ne pouvais rien dire puisque je ne vivais avec aucun de mes parents. Ainsi je racontais des mensonges à propos de mes parents.

La famille de ma mère ne voulait pas que je sache quoi que ce soit sur mon père bien que ma mère ait eu l'habitude de dire que je lui ressemblais. J'appris qu'il vivait à Kinshasa et qu'il était docteur. Je racontais aux autres enfants qu'il avait une fantastique maison sur roues à Kinshasa. Jusqu'à présent mes amis d'enfance me taquent à ce propos disant: "Tu avais menti Félix, vous n'aviez pas une maison avec des roues". C'est très dur pour un enfant, surtout un garçon, de ne pas connaître son père et j'étais triste à cause de cela. Je voulais le connaître et j'ai finalement pu le rencontrer à l'âge de 10 ans.

L'école

Je suis allé à l'école à Kinzambi non loin de Kikwit. C'était un pensionnat pour garçons dirigé par des Jésuites. C'était une très bonne école. J'ai tout appris en français. Le français est comme du sang coulant dans mes veines. J'ai commencé à étudier quand j'avais sept ans et j'ai terminé les études primaires en six ans. Plus tard je suis allé dans une autre école de Frères

My family

I am from the province of Bandundu in Zaïre. I was born in Lusanga but my parents divorced after I was born and so I was sent to live with my grandmother and my uncle, in Kikwit, 30 miles away. In my tribe we think a child belongs more to its mother's family, so in some ways my uncle was as important as my father. My uncle had a good job – he was an agronomist (someone who is an agricultural scientist). He paid for everything for me.

When I was a little boy I missed my mother and I was angry with her for sending me away. Now I understand more of why she had to do it. At school the other children used to talk about their parents, saying 'My dad said this, my mum did that.' I couldn't say anything as I didn't live with either parent. So I just told lies about my parents. My mother's family didn't want me to know anything about my father although my mother used to say I looked like him. I learnt he lived in Kinshasa and was a doctor. I used to tell the other children he had a fantastic big house in Kinshasa, on wheels. Even now my childhood friends tease me about this and say 'You lied Felix, you didn't have a house with wheels!' It is very hard for a child, especially a boy, not to know his father and I felt very sad about it. I wanted to know him and I did eventually meet him when I was ten.

School

I went to school in Kizambi near Kikwit. It was a boys' boarding school run by Jesuits. It is a very good school. I learnt everything in French. French is like blood running in my veins. I started school when I was seven years old and did six years of primary school education. Later I went to another Jesuit Brothers' School in Kinshasa to do the two years of my *Cycle d'Orientation*. It was also a boarding school and was connected to my old school at Kizambi. After two years I started my *Cycle Supérieur* and

Jésuites à Kinshasa pour suivre mon cycle d'orientation. C'était aussi un pensionnat rattaché à mon ancienne école de Kinzambi. ■ Deux ans après je suis passé au cycle supérieur pour me spécialiser en sciences commerciales. J'ai fait cela dans une autre école de Jésuites de la congrégation des "Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes". Elle était dirigée par des Frères Jésuites blancs qui étaient très stricts.

L'école de Kinzambi avait de beaux bâtiments et elle avait un immense verger plein d'orangers. Nous ne pouvions pas toucher aux oranges avant le 19 mars de chaque année. Elles n'étaient d'ailleurs pas mûres avant cela. Notre école était dédiée à Saint Joseph et le 19 mars était sa journée spéciale. Ce jour-là on nous servait des mets délicieux et nous mettions nos plus beaux habits. Les frères nous répétaient souvent: "le 19 mars arrive, vous devez vous apprêter*".

Après le 19 mars nous pouvions cueillir les oranges. Chacun avait son couteau pour les couper. On ne pouvait pas demander le couteau d'un autre, question de dignité personnelle. Nous fabriquions nos couteaux avec les lames d'emballage des caisses: nous coupions un morceau et nous l'aiguisions. A partir de janvier nous devions nous trouver un morceau de métal pour nous apprêter* pour le 19 mars. Nous avions aussi l'habitude de faire le tour des orangers et de décider lesquels avaient les oranges les meilleures.

Du 19 mars jusqu'à septembre nous pouvions tous manger des oranges. Les Jésuites n'étaient pas vraiment amateurs d'oranges. C'est typiquement zaïrois qu'un pays qui cultive tant d'oranges n'ait eu aucune usine pour en extraire le jus. Je vois ici des cartons de jus d'orange dans les supermarchés et cela me rend triste en pensant à mon pays.

specialised in business administration. I did this at a different Jesuit Brothers school: *Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes*. This was run by white Jesuit brothers who were very strict.

The school at Kizambi had nice buildings and it had a huge field full of orange trees. We weren't allowed to touch the oranges before 19 March every year. They weren't really ripe before then. Our school was dedicated to Saint Joseph and 19 March was his special day. On that day we were served very nice meals and we had to wear our best clothes. The Brothers would keep saying '19 March is coming, you have to get ready.'

After 19 March we could pick the oranges. Everyone had their own knife to cut down the oranges. You couldn't ask anyone for their knife, it was a matter of pride. We made our own knives from the metal strips around packing cases – we cut off a bit of metal and sharpened it. From January onwards we found our own bit of metal to get ready for 19 March. We also used to look at the trees and decide which ones had the best oranges. From 19 March onwards, to September, all us boys ate oranges. The Jesuits didn't really use the oranges. It was typical of Zaïre that the country grew lots of oranges but didn't have a single orange juice factory. Here I look at orange juice cartons in the supermarket and still feel sad about my country.

L'université

Au moment où j'ai obtenu mon diplôme à Kinshasa mon oncle s'était marié et avait ses propres enfants. Il ne pouvait plus continuer à m'aider. Ma mère était aussi décédée à cette même période. J'avais retrouvé mon père et j'allais le voir de temps en temps. Bien que j'aie souhaité le rencontrer, quand je l'ai vu ce fut très décevant. Je n'avais pas l'impression d'être rattaché à lui. Je m'étais alors rendu compte que je devais travailler pour gagner ma vie. Je ne suis pas directement passé à l'université comme la plupart de mes amis.

Chaque famille est fière quand l'un de ses membres va à l'université. J'avais vu mon demi-frère aller à l'université et je me suis dit: "pourquoi pas moi". C'est ainsi qu'après quelques années de service je suis entré à l'université pour étudier les sciences commerciales et administratives pendant quatre ans. Je me suis spécialisé en douanes et assises. Je payais pour mes études bien que je fus marié et aie eu un fils, Lionel.

The University

By the time I graduated from school in Kinshasa my uncle had got married and had his own children and couldn't carry on supporting me. My mother died at about that time too. I had found my father and went to see him from time to time. Although I had wanted to meet him, when I did it was rather disappointing. I didn't really feel any connection with him. I realised I had to work to support myself. I didn't go to university at that time, like lots of my friends did.

Every family is proud if someone goes to university. I saw my half brother go and I thought why not me? So after a few years working I went to university in Kinshasa for four years to study business administration and did a special option in customs and excise. I paid for my own fees although I was now married with a young son, Lionel.

Kinshasa



Jorn St Jernkelar/Impact

Les conflits de Lubumbashi

Après les études universitaires j'ai commencé à travailler comme douanier. En 1990 je travaillais à Lubumbashi, dans la province du Shaba. Il y avait des problèmes à Lubumbashi. Les étudiants avaient manifesté contre le régime de Mobutu. En avril 1990, Mobutu avait fait un discours déclarant que les partis d'opposition étaient autorisés au Zaïre, et qu'il y avait liberté et démocratie au Zaïre. C'est ainsi que les étudiants d'autres tribus avaient dit qu'ils ne voulaient plus de Mobutu comme chef d'Etat. Mobutu a alors envoyé sa garde spéciale présidentielle pour punir les étudiants au campus de Lubumbashi. Je travaillais à la centrale électrique quand le chef régional des services de sécurité est venu nous ordonner de procéder à la coupure du courant sur le campus de Lubumbashi. Il était armé.

Quand je suis arrivé chez moi, j'ai trouvé quelques étudiants originaires de ma région natale de Bandundu qui étaient venus me voir. Leurs vêtements étaient couverts de sang. Ils m'ont dit que des étudiants avaient été tués au campus. C'est alors que j'ai compris pourquoi on nous avait demandé de procéder à la coupure du courant sur l'université. Quelques parlementaires sont venus mener des enquêtes pour déterminer si des étudiants avaient été tués. Ils sont venus m'interroger à ce sujet. Je leur ai dit que j'avais appris que quelques étudiants avaient été tués et que le responsable des services de sécurité nous avait demandé de procéder à la coupure du courant. Je croyais qu'il y avait démocratie au Zaïre et que je devais dire la vérité. Ce fut ma plus grosse erreur.

Shaba Province:
children wait for
their parents to
return to the
village with food

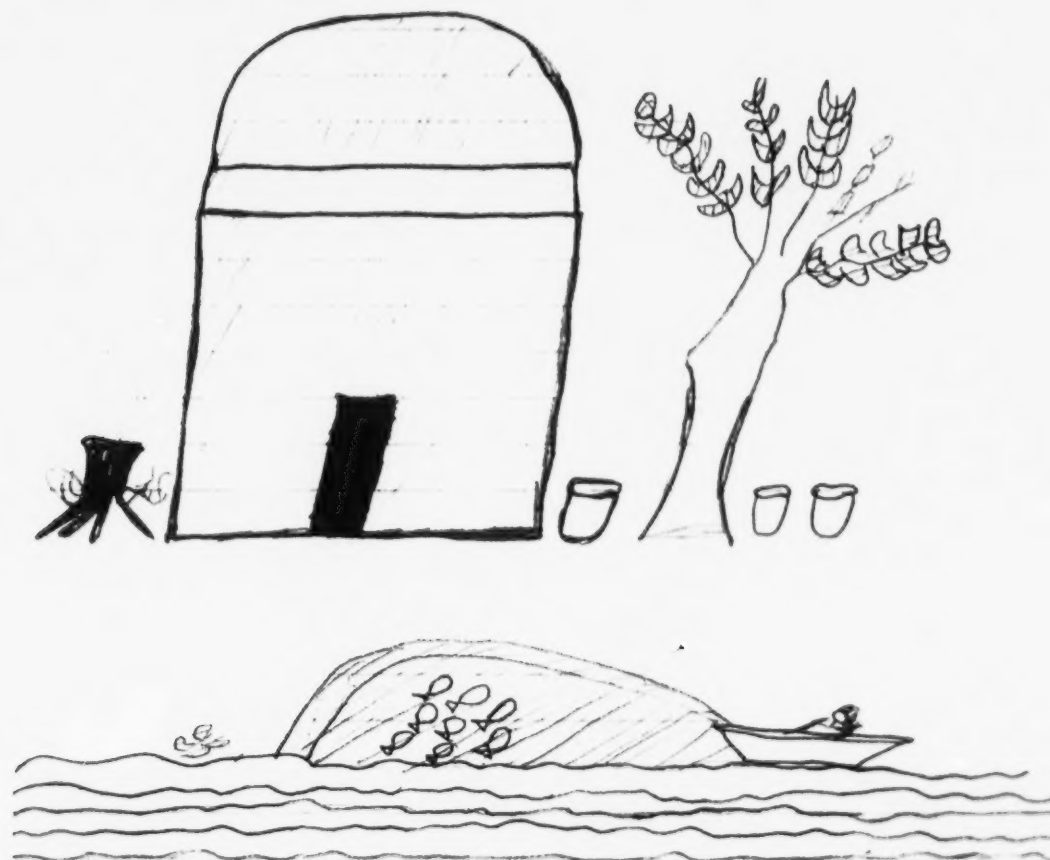
Trouble in Lubumbashi

After university I started work as a customs officer. In 1990 I was working in Lubumbashi in Shaba province. There was trouble in Lubumbashi. The students marched against the Mobutu regime. Mobutu had made a speech in April 1990 saying that opposition parties were allowed in Zaïre, and that there was freedom and democracy in Zaïre. So the students from other tribes said that they didn't want Mobutu as leader any more. Mobutu sent his special presidential guard to punish the students on Lubumbashi campus. I was working at the power station and the Regional Head of Security Services came and told us to cut the power to the university campus. He had a gun.

When I got home, some students from my home region, Bandundu, came to see me. They had blood on their clothes. They said some students had been killed on the campus. Now I understood why they had asked us to cut the power to the university. Some MPs came to Lubumbashi to investigate whether the students had been killed. They came to ask me about it. I said that I had heard some students had been killed and that the Head of Security Services had told us to cut off the power. I thought there was democracy in Zaïre and that I should tell the truth. That was my big mistake.



John Anthony/Janos Pictures



A small village by the river in Zaire with a fishing boat, drawn by Lionel Matu (age 12).

La prison

Un mois plus tard les agents de la sécurité sont venus chez moi à deux heures du matin m'arrêter pour "un problème de sécurité". Ils m'ont conduit dans une prison où je fus interrogé sur ce que j'avais dit aux parlementaires. Ils m'ont fait comprendre que puisque j'avais parlé aux parlementaires je devais être contre le régime. Je leur ai dit que je n'étais pas contre, qu'il y avait la démocratie et que je devais dire la vérité. Je fus gardé les yeux bandés dans une cellule sombre pendant un mois. Je n'ai pas vu le soleil pendant tout ce temps. Après ils m'ont emmené à Kinshasa en avion, toujours avec les yeux bandés. Je fus enfermé dans une prison et torturé pour avoir parlé aux parlementaires. Ils me frappaient aux pieds et sur le corps avec une matraque. Ils m'ont forcé à frapper sur un morceau de bouteille de Coca cassée, ce qui a fait enfler ma main. Cependant je fus moins sévèrement traité que les autres prisonniers parce que mon beau-frère était colonel dans l'armée.

Prison

A month later the Security Services came to my house at 2 a.m. to arrest me for a 'security matter'. They took me to prison and questioned me about what I had said to the MPs. They said because I had spoken to the MPs I was against the regime. I said that I wasn't, that we had a democracy and I should speak the truth. I was kept blindfolded in a dark cell for a month. I didn't see the sun all that time. Then they took me, still blindfolded, on a plane to Kinshasa. I was put in prison there, and tortured to punish me for speaking to the MPs. They beat my feet and body with a truncheon. They made me hit a broken bottle of coke ten times with my hand so my hand became swollen. I was treated less badly than other prisoners because my brother-in-law was a colonel in the army.

La fuite

Je suis resté en prison pendant deux mois puis mon beau-frère nous a aidés, moi et d'autres prisonniers, à nous évader. Il a envoyé quelqu'un à la prison, qui s'est fait passer pour l'un de ceux qui nous interrogeaient. Nous avons dû ramper comme des crocodiles. Nous avons rencontré l'envoyé de mon beau-frère qui nous a cachés dans une maison secrète arrangée par mon beau-frère. On m'a donné une fausse barbe à mettre. L'agent me conduisit à l'aéroport. Ma femme et nos deux enfants, Lionel et Nushka furent embarqués sur le même vol que moi. Mon beau-frère avait tout arrangé. Je serais mort sans lui. Il fut tué au Zaïre quelques temps après: quelqu'un l'avait empoisonné.

L'avion nous emmena au Ghana. Je crois que c'était un avion militaire. Nous sommes restés quatre jours au Ghana. Un Ghanéen appelé Kofi Bushia voyageait avec nous pendant la dernière étape du voyage. Je pense que mon beau-frère avait pris des dispositions pour qu'il vienne avec nous. Kofi Bushia m'avait remis un faux passeport – si j'avais eu mon vrai passeport j'aurais été arrêté à l'aéroport puisque j'étais un prisonnier en fuite. A bord de l'avion je ne cessais de demander à Kofi Bushia où nous allions. Je pensais qu'on allait dans un pays francophone. Finalement Kofi Bushia me précisa que nous allions à Londres. Ma première réaction fut: "Oh non, je ne parle pas anglais". Mais à présent je suis content d'être en Grande-Bretagne. Il y a beaucoup d'espions de Mobutu en Belgique et en France. Et je pense qu'un Noir serait mieux ici qu'en France ou en Belgique. Quelquefois je suis victime du racisme mais je sais que les rapports entre Noirs et Blancs sont assez bons.

L'arrivée en Grande-Bretagne

Nous sommes arrivés à l'aéroport de Gatwick et ensuite nous avons pris le train pour Victoria. Kofi a acheté deux tickets pour moi et ma femme et nous a demandé de nous rendre au Home Office* à Croydon. "Ma mission est terminée" nous a-t-il dit et il nous a quittés. J'étais totalement désorienté. Je ne pouvais balbutier que quelques mots d'anglais.

Au Home Office* je dis que nous venions d'arriver et que nous n'avions nulle part où aller. Les gens du Home Office* nous ont

Escape

I was in prison for two months and then my brother-in-law helped me and some other prisoners to escape. He sent someone to the prison at night who pretended to be one of the people interrogating us. We had to run like crocodiles on our bellies. We met my brother-in-law's agent and stayed in a safe house arranged by my brother-in-law. I was given a false beard to wear. The agent took me to the airport. My wife and our two little children, Lionel and Nushka, were at the airport and were going on the same flight as me. My brother-in-law had arranged everything. I might be dead if it wasn't for him. He was killed in Zaïre later on – someone poisoned him.

The plane took us to Ghana. I think it was a military plane. We stayed in Ghana for four days. A Ghanaian man called Kofi Bushia came with us on the last bit of our journey. I think my brother-in-law arranged for him to come with us. Kofi Bushia gave me a false passport – if I'd had my real passport I would have been arrested at the airport as I was an escaped prisoner. On the plane I kept asking Kofi Bushia where we were going. I thought we'd be going to a French speaking country. Kofi Bushia finally told me that we were going to London. My first thought was, 'Oh no, I can't speak English.' But now I'm glad I'm in Britain. There are too many Mobutu spies in Belgium and France. And I think it's better to be a black person here than in France and Belgium. I sometimes experience racism but I think the relationship between black and white is quite good here.

Arriving in Britain

We arrived at Gatwick airport and got a train to Victoria. Kofi Bushia bought two travel cards for my wife and I, and told us to go to Croydon, to the Home Office. He said 'My mission is finished', and left us. I felt totally confused. I could only speak a few words of English.

At the Home Office I told them we'd just arrived and didn't know anyone. The Home Office sent us to the Refugee Council and they gave us some money – 10 pounds. By this time it was about 6 o'clock in the evening and they sent us to Lambeth Housing Office. When we got there it was shut. We

recommandés auprès du *Council for Refugees** où on nous a remis 10 livres. Il était six heures du soir au moment où ils nous ont envoyés au bureau du logement de Lambeth. Quand nous y sommes arrivés le bureau était déjà fermé. Nous n'avions nulle part où aller. Ma femme et nos deux enfants sont allés dormir à la station de métro de Brixton pendant que moi je suis allé au commissariat de police. Ils ne pouvaient pas nous trouver un logement et m'ont dit que je ne pouvais pas rester au commissariat parce que je n'avais pas commis de délit.

Je dus malgré moi dormir sur le trottoir devant le bureau du logement. Il faisait très froid. Je me rappelle clairement de la date: c'était le 6 mars 1991. Pendant ce temps un monsieur noir qui avait eu pitié de ma femme et de mes enfants les avait emmenés passer la nuit chez lui. Le bureau du logement était situé juste en face d'un bar appelé *The Fridge*, alors je suis parti demander si je pouvais entrer et prendre un jus de fruits pour rester au chaud. Mais c'était une soirée réservée aux femmes et donc je n'y avais pas accès. Ainsi je me suis couché sur le trottoir. Je ne portais qu'un tricot et un imperméable. Le lendemain j'étais le premier à être servi au bureau du logement. On m'a donné du café et ensuite on nous a envoyés dans un hôtel à Pimlico.

didn't have anywhere to go. My wife and two children went to sleep in Brixton underground station and I went to the police station. They couldn't find us anywhere to stay and said I couldn't stay there as I hadn't committed any crime.

I tried to sleep on the pavement outside the Housing Office. It was very cold. I can remember the date clearly – 6 March 1991. Meanwhile a black man had taken pity on my wife and children and taken them to his house to sleep for the night. The Housing Office was right next to a club called 'The Fridge' so I asked if I could come in and buy a drink so I could stay in the warm. But it was a women's only night and they wouldn't let me in. So I just lay on the pavement. I only had a jumper and a light raincoat. In the morning I was the first person to be served at the Housing Office. They gave me a coffee and then sent us to a hotel in Pimlico.

From the left: Felix Matu's wife, Marie-Claire, son Ian, niece Laëtitia, daughter Nushka and son Lionel



Brian Morrison

La vie en Grande-Bretagne

Plus tard, nous sommes restés dans une chambre d'hôtel à Paddington pendant six mois. Nous avons maintenant un appartement à Lambeth que j'ai redécoré pour qu'il soit plus beau. J'attends toujours une décision du *Home Office** pour savoir si nous pouvons résider ici.

L'une des premières choses que j'aie faites fut de prendre des cours d'anglais au *college** de Westminster. J'ai pensé que je devais m'intégrer dans la société et apprendre à communiquer avec les gens d'ici. La meilleure solution était d'apprendre à parler la langue, à la lire et à l'écrire. J'ai réussi mes examens et ensuite j'ai fait les sciences administratives et commerciales pendant un an. Après cela je tenais à travailler. J'en avais marre d'attendre les allocations familiales.

J'ai travaillé comme surveillant à *Superdrug*. C'était très mal payé – 3,75 livres de l'heure – et pas intéressant. Je travaillais douze heures par jour. Je devais veiller sur le magasin. Un jour j'ai arrêté une fille noire pour vol. Elle m'a dit des méchancetés eu égard à mon origine africaine. Cela m'a fait pleurer. J'ai décidé de ne plus continuer à travailler. Le patron de *Superdrug* m'a même conseillé de prendre un autre emploi après avoir vu le niveau de mes qualifications. J'avais décidé d'aller au *college**.

Je suis le cours de *B Tech** en deux ans, en sciences technologique et informatique. Je me débrouille bien. Quand j'aurai terminé le cours, j'aimerais aller à l'université préparer un diplôme en informatique. Le problème est que je suis Noir et que mon anglais n'est pas parfait. J'aimerais avoir un ami anglais avec qui je pourrais perfectionner mon anglais. Il n'y a aucun Anglais dans mon programme. Mon fils Lionel parle anglais mieux que moi. Notre troisième enfant est né en mars. Il s'appelle Ian Richard. Nous lui avons donné un nom anglais parce que l'Angleterre nous a rendu notre liberté, et je suis très reconnaissant envers le peuple anglais.

Ecrit par Félix Matu, un Zairois qui vit au sud de Londres. C'était un récit oral. Vous pourrez trouver d'autres extraits de son histoire à la page 39.

My life in Britain

We then lived in a room in a hotel in Paddington for six months. We've now got a flat in Lambeth and I've done it up so it looks nice. I'm still waiting for a decision from the Home Office about whether we can stay here.

One of the first things I did was to go to an English class at Westminster College. I thought that I must integrate in this society and learn to communicate with people here. The best way is to speak the language and learn to read and write it. I passed my English exam and then did a business administration course for a year. After that I thought I really wanted to work. I was fed up with waiting for Income Support money.

I started work as a security guard for 'Superdrug'. It was very badly paid – £3.75 an hour and very boring. I worked 12 hours a day. I just had to keep an eye on the shop. One day I arrested a black girl for shoplifting. She said dreadful things to me about being African. It made me cry. I decided I couldn't carry on. The manager at 'Superdrug' even advised me to try another job when he saw how good my qualifications were. So I decided to go to college.

I'm doing a two year B. Tech. course at Lambeth College in information technology and computer studies. I'm getting on quite well. When I finish the course I may go on to university and get a degree in computing. The difficulties are that I'm black and also my English isn't perfect. I'd like an English friend to practise English with. There are no English people on my course. My son Lionel speaks English better than me.

Our third child was born in March. He's called Ian Richard. We gave him an English name because England has given us our freedom, and I'm grateful to English people.

By Felix Matu, a Zairean man living in south London. This was an oral account. Some more of his story is on page 39.

Felix Matu at home in London



Brian Morrison

DEPART DU ZAIRE LEAVING ZAIRE

FRENCH

Départ pour la Belgique

Je me rappelle quand j'étais au Zaïre ma mère nous dit un jour qu'elle avait reçu une lettre de mon père disant que nous devions le rejoindre en Belgique. Je m'imaginais que mon père vivait dans un lieu spécial et que je serais en mesure de contempler toute la ville du haut de l'étage.

Nous sommes arrivés à l'aéroport de Bruxelles le soir. Nous avons montré nos passeports à un officier belge et quand j'ai levé les yeux j'ai vu mon père nous faire signe de la main à partir du balcon des visiteurs. Nous étions tellement contents de le voir. Nous avons alors pris un taxi qui nous a conduits à l'appartement. Mon père vivait au quatorzième étage. Mon rêve s'était réalisé puisqu'il habitait au dernier étage.

Ecrit par Bolombo Motondo, un garçon de 14 ans élevé à l'école George Orwell, Islington, Londres. Vous pourrez trouver d'autres écrits de Bolombo aux pages 13 et 38.

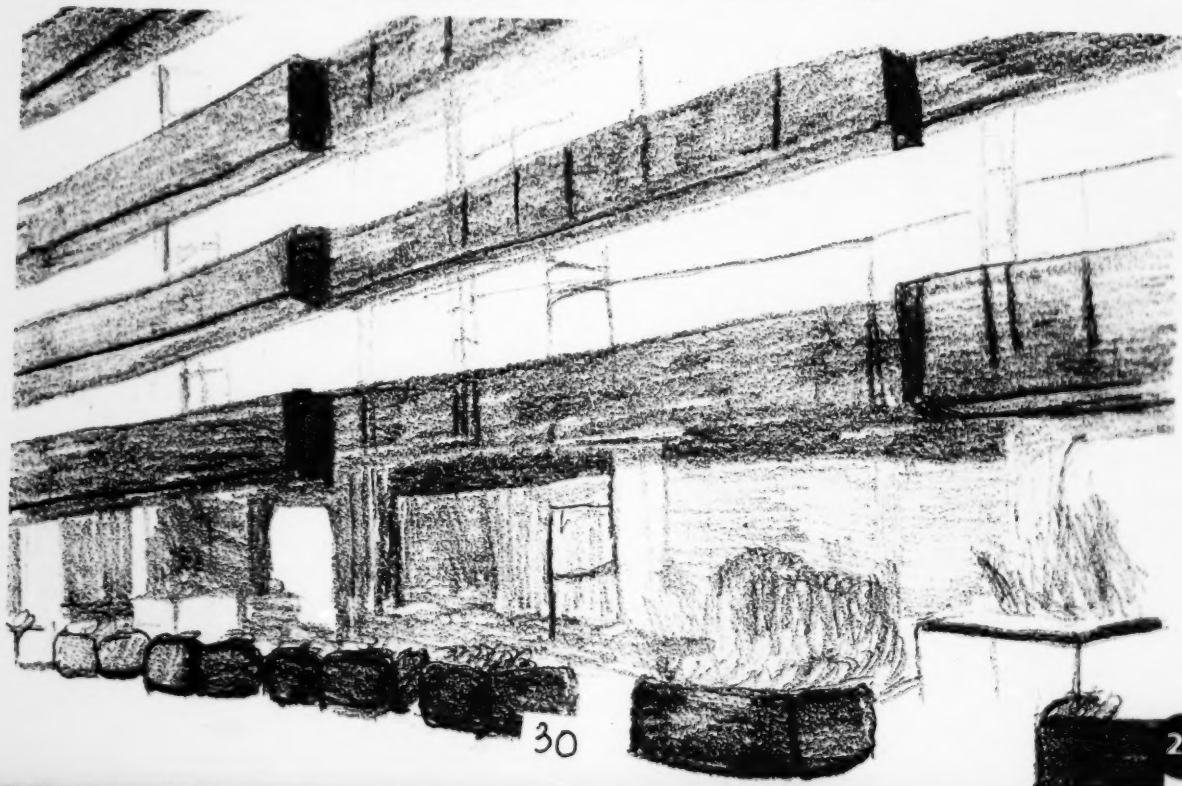
Leaving for Belgium

I remember when I was in Zaïre my mum told us that she had received a letter from my dad, and he said that we were going to join him in Belgium. I thought my dad was living in some special place in Brussels and I would be able to see all the city below from the top floor.

We arrived at Brussels airport in the evening. We showed our passports to a Belgian official and as I looked up I saw my dad in the visitor's balcony waving to us! We were so glad to see him. Then we took a taxi and drove to a 14th floor apartment where my dad lived. My dream came true because he lived on the top floor.

Written by Bolombo Motondo, a 14 year old boy at George Orwell School, Islington, London. Some more of Bolombo's writing is on pages 13 and 38.

Our apartment block in Brussels, drawn by Bolombo Motondo



Mon mari s'enfuit du Zaïre

Le MPR (Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution), parti politique du Président Mobutu, était le seul parti politique reconnu au Zaïre. Il y avait aussi une branche pour la jeunesse appelée la JMPR. Il y avait une section de la JMPR dans chaque université. Mon mari Lutu était le dirigeant du comité. Il n'était pas d'accord avec leurs principes mais il y avait des avantages à être membre: les membres avaient leur chambre à l'université, leurs frais scolaires étaient payés et ils avaient un emploi garanti à la fin des études. Au Zaïre cela valait bien le coup. La JMPR avait comme mission d'informer le MPR sur les activités des étudiants.

Vers 1989, le peuple zaïrois voulait une démocratie basée sur le multipartisme. Il y avait d'autres partis mais qui n'étaient pas officiellement reconnus. Je crois que c'est en février 1989 que les étudiants ont fait une marche de protestation dans les rues de Kinshasa pour que les autres partis politiques soient reconnus au Zaïre. Mon mari a pris part à la marche mais en sa qualité de dirigeant du comité de la JMPR il devait plutôt informer le gouvernement sur les plans regardant l'organisation de la marche.

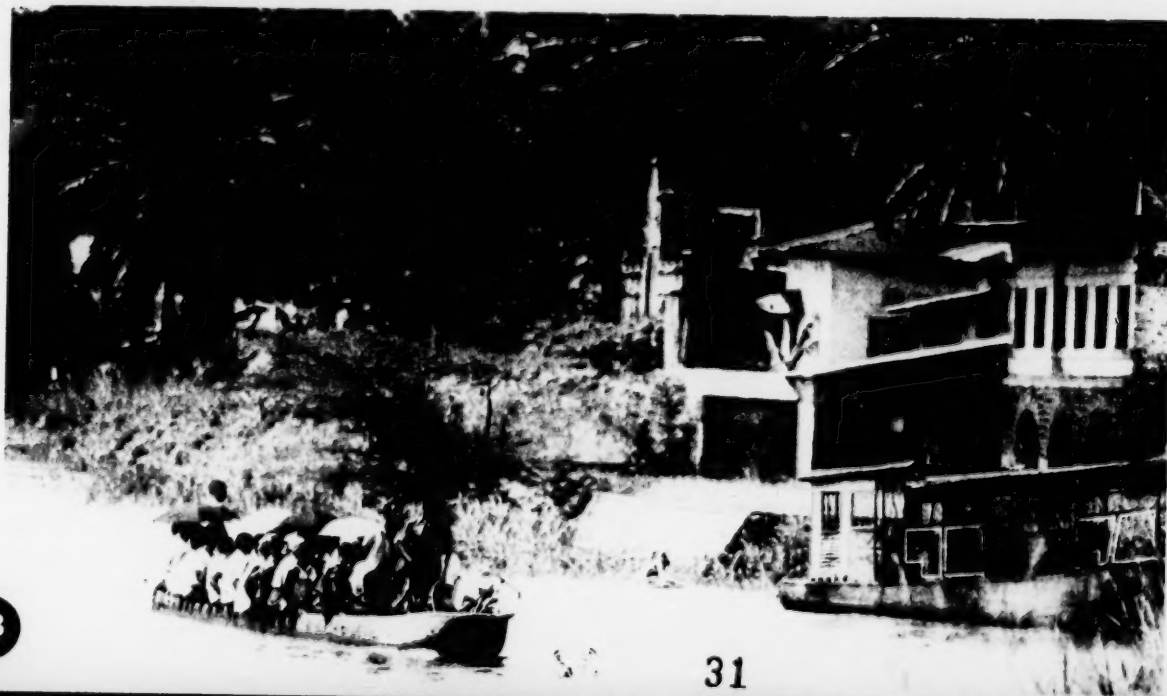
Lutu savait qu'il y aurait des problèmes immédiatement après la marche. D'autres membres du comité furent par la suite emprisonnés et tués. Il s'enfuit immédiatement après au Congo. Il est revenu pour me dire au revoir et est parti dans la précipitation. Il est

parti au Congo par pirogue. Il avait corrompu un pêcheur pour l'emmener. C'était très dangereux à cause de la police maritime. Il devait compter sur le pêcheur pour trouver le moment et l'endroit propices pour traverser. La traversée vers Brazzaville, la capitale du Congo, a duré une heure et demie. Lutu devait se cacher parce que les gouvernements du Zaïre et du Congo ont des accords et le Congo l'aurait renvoyé si on l'avait découvert.

Il y a beaucoup d'échanges commerciaux entre Kinshasa et Brazzaville et de ce fait je pouvais aller à Brazzaville en tant que commerçante visiter mon mari. Il est resté caché pendant quatre mois. Nous avons alors pensé que Lutu serait plus en sécurité en Europe. J'ai utilisé l'argent que j'avais accumulé grâce à mon commerce pour acheter un billet d'avion de Brazzaville à Bruxelles. Des gens l'ont aidé à venir en Grande-Bretagne. Il est venu par bateau et il est arrivé en Grande-Bretagne le 4 janvier 1990. On l'a accepté comme demandeur d'asile et il s'est rendu à Londres. En mai 1990 je suis venue en Grande-Bretagne avec ma fille rejoindre mon mari.

Ecrit par Francine Songo, une Zaïroise habitant à Ilford, Essex. Ceci était un récit oral. Vous pourrez trouver d'autres extraits de son histoire aux pages 10, 12, 13 et 40. Après avoir trouvé la sécurité en Angleterre, son mari est tragiquement décédé de causes naturelles en 1993, à l'âge de 33 ans.

Ferry boat at Kisangani, Zaïre



Colin Jones/Impact



Thirty seven people were killed when soldiers opened fire on a peaceful demonstration in Kinshasa in February 1992 – this injured victim is being carried away by friends

February 1989 I think when the students marched and protested in the streets of Kinshasa for other political parties to be recognised in Zaire. My husband was on the march but as the leader of the JMPR committee he should have been informing the government about plans for the march. Lutu knew immediately after the march that there would be big problems. Other people on the committee were later imprisoned and killed. He fled to Congo straight away. He just came back to the house to say goodbye to me and then hurriedly left. He went to Congo by boat – a rowing boat. He bribed a fisherman to take him. It was quite dangerous because of the maritime police. He had to trust the fisherman to find the right place and time to cross. It took about one and a half hours to cross the Congo river to Brazzaville – the capital of Congo. Lutu had to hide in Brazzaville because the governments of Zaire and Congo are in support of each other, and Congo would have sent him back to Zaire if they'd found him. There is lots of trade between Kinshasa and Brazzaville so I was able to go as a trader to Brazzaville

My husband flees Zaire

President Mobutu's political party, the MPR (Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution) was the only political party allowed in Zaire. There was also a youth wing of the MPR, called the JMPR. In each university there was a committee of the JMPR. My husband, Lutu, was the leader of the committee. He didn't agree with their ideas, but there were advantages in belonging – members got their own room at university, money towards their studies and a job guaranteed at the end. In Zaire that was worth a lot. The JMPR committee was supposed to inform on the activities of students to the MPR.

By 1989, people in Zaire wanted a multi-party democracy. There were other political parties in Zaire but they were not officially recognised. It was

to visit my husband. He stayed in hiding there for four months.

We thought Lutu would be safer in Europe. I used the money from my business to pay for a plane ticket for him from Brazzaville to Brussels. Some people helped him get to Britain. He went by ferry and arrived in Britain on 4 January 1990. He was accepted as an asylum seeker and went to London.

In May 1990 I came to Britain with my daughter to join my husband.

By Francine Songo, a Zairean woman living in Ilford, Essex. This was an oral account given in French. Some more of her story is on pages 10, 12, 13 and 40. After reaching safety in England, her husband tragically died of natural causes in 1993, aged 33.

Voyage pour l'Angleterre

Je suis venue en Angleterre à l'âge de neuf ans. Je n'avais pas compris pourquoi nous devions quitter le Zaïre pour l'Angleterre. Pour me l'expliquer, ma mère m'avait dit que mon père, qui était déjà en Angleterre, avait des problèmes avec la police zaïroise. Elle a ajouté que si nous ne quittions pas le Zaïre nous serions tués. Vous pouvez alors imaginer combien j'ai eu peur quand nous sommes montés à bord de l'avion et que les deux premiers sièges étaient occupés par des soldats. Les soldats zaïrois ont mauvaise réputation.

À notre arrivée en Angleterre, mon père, que je n'avais plus vu depuis six ans, nous attendait. Mon frère ne pouvait le reconnaître et ma sœur ne l'avait jamais vu avant: mon frère avait deux ans et ma sœur venait de naître quand il a quitté le Zaïre.

Il me semblait étrange de le rencontrer car je ne me souvenais pas de son visage. Ma sœur qui était restée silencieuse pendant que nous embrassions papa, ouvrit alors la bouche pour dire: "Maintenant que nous avons visité cet homme, pouvons-nous retourner à la maison?" Elle croyait être venue en vacances.

Nous avions une image de ce que pouvait être l'Angleterre. Nous nous imaginions un pays couvert de neige pendant toute l'année. Nous croyions que la nourriture tombait du ciel. Quand nous sommes arrivés "chez nous" un homme à côté d'un étalage du marché invitait en criant les passants à acheter ses légumes. Ce n'était pas différent de mon pays le Zaïre. Je me rappelle encore mon frère murmurer à ma maman: "Est-ce que nous sommes déjà en Angleterre?"

Écrit par Atandjo Otshudi, une jeune maman de 17 ans, étudiante au Six Form Centre, Islington, Londres. Vous pourrez trouver d'autres extraits de son histoire à la page 33.

Journey to England

I came to England at the age of nine. I could not understand why we were leaving Zaïre to come to England. To explain, my mother said my father, who was already in England, was in trouble with the Zaïrean police. She further explained that if we did not leave we would get killed. So you can imagine how scared I was when we got into the plane and the first few seats were occupied by Zaïrean soldiers. Zaïrean soldiers have a very bad reputation.

When we arrived in England my father, who I had not seen for six years, was waiting for us. My brother could not remember him and my sister had never seen him before; my brother was two and my sister had only just been born when he left Zaïre. It was strange to see him again because I did not remember how he looked. My sister, who kept quiet as we embraced our father, soon opened her mouth and said, 'Now that we have visited this man, can we go back home now?' To her, she was just on holiday.

We had an image of what England was supposed to look like. We imagined a country covered with snow all year round. We pictured food falling from the sky. When we reached our 'home', a man at the market stall was encouraging people to buy his vegetables by shouting to the pedestrians. It was no different from my own country Zaïre. I can still remember my brother muttering to my mother, 'Are we in England yet?'

Written by Atandjo Otshudi, a 17 year old young woman studying at Islington Sixth Form Centre, London. Some more of her story is on page 33.

ARRIVEE EN ANGLETERRE ARRIVING IN ENGLAND

FRENCH

La cabine téléphonique

Je suis arrivée à Londres pendant la nuit du 26 décembre 1993 venant du Zaïre, avec ma fille de 4 ans. Le monsieur qui m'avait aidée pendant le voyage de l'Afrique jusqu'en Angleterre était obligé de nous trouver un endroit pour passer la nuit, mais n'arrêta pas de me rappeler que le lendemain matin je devrais me débrouiller seule car, en ce qui le concernait, sa mission était terminée. C'est ainsi que le lendemain matin le monsieur nous laissa dans la rue en me disant que si nous restions là, nous aurions plus de chance de croiser un Africain ou peut-être un Zaïrois qui nous aiderait à trouver le Home Office*.

C'était pratiquement incroyable, mais comme on le dit souvent: "Tout est possible à celui qui croit". Dans cette foule j'ai croisé deux jeunes gens qui parlaient ma langue.

Spontanément je les ai abordés et leur ai demandé de nous aider. Ils ont été très gentils avec nous et ils étaient même disposés à nous accompagner au Home Office* mais malheureusement ils allaient au travail.

Néanmoins, l'un d'eux nous donna le numéro de téléphone de Barnados et nous dit qu'il y avait un Zaïrois qui travaillait là-bas et qu'il serait en mesure de m'aider à résoudre mes

The telephone box

I arrived in London from Zaïre on the night of 26 December 1993 with my four year old daughter. The man who helped me travel from Africa to the UK found a place for us for the night, while he kept reminding me that the next day I should look after myself because his mission had ended.

Early the next morning the man left us in the street and claimed that if we stood there we had a better chance of catching sight of black African people or even Zaïreans who would be able to help us and show us the way to the Home Office.

It was almost unbelievable, but as people often say, 'Everything is possible for anyone with faith'. In that crowd I met two young people who spoke Lingala (my language). I spontaneously approached them and begged them to help us. They were very kind to us and were willing to take us to the Home Office, but unfortunately they were going to work. However, one of them gave me the phone number for Barnados and told me that there was a Zaïrean man working there who would certainly help me solve my

Zaïrean refugees in Britain have formed their own organisation, COREZAG, and have regular meetings (not everyone pictured is a refugee)



Dr Mayala

problèmes. J'ai immédiatement appelé le numéro au bureau, mais il n'y avait personne. Comme il n'était pas encore 9 heures, j'avais laissé un message sur le répondeur. J'ai dû attendre près de la cabine téléphonique pendant plus de trois heures. Je dois souligner qu'il faisait excessivement froid et en plus il pleuvait.

C'est vers 9h15 que finalement le téléphone sonna. C'était le monsieur zairois de *Barnardos*. Nous avons parlé un peu de mon problème, ensuite il m'a demandé de lui décrire l'endroit où j'étais. C'est après une longue période d'attente qu'il est venu nous chercher.

Il m'a aidée à faire les démarches prioritaires, c'est-à-dire en rapport avec le *Home Office** et le logement. C'est grâce à lui qu'on a pu trouver un logement dans un hôtel. Le lendemain il était venu avec nous au *DSS** pour nous aider à trouver une assistance financière. Après une longue période d'attente nous étions transférées à notre habitation actuelle, un appartement. Malheureusement je viens de recevoir une lettre m'ordonnant de partir, disant que je n'ai pas le droit d'être logée jusqu'à ce que je reçoive un *SAL**. Je dois signaler à ce propos que je suis allée à huit rendez-vous au *Home Office** avec l'espoir d'obtenir un *SAL** mais personne ne veut croire à mon identité. On me demande de fournir d'autres preuves d'identité que je ne peux pas leur fournir parce que simplement je n'en ai pas.

Ecrit par Madame Matu Ngiela, une Zaïroise vivant à Londres.

problems. I rang the office immediately, but there was no-one in so I left a message on the answering machine as it was before 9.00 a.m. I had to wait next to the telephone box with my daughter for almost three hours and I must point out that it was extremely cold, and raining.

It was finally at 9.15 that the telephone rang and it was the Zairean man from *Barnardos*. We talked for a while about my problem, then he asked me to describe to him the place where I was and after a long wait he finally came to pick us up.

He helped me make the most important arrangements, that is, in relation to the Home Office, housing and the Council. It is thanks to him we were accommodated in a hotel and the next day he went with us to the *DSS* for some financial assistance. After a long period on the waiting list, we were then transferred to our present accommodation – a flat.

Unfortunately, I have just been issued with a notice to quit. I am told that I have no right to be accommodated until I am issued with a *SAL* (Standard Acknowledgement Letter). I must point out that I have attended eight interviews at the Home Office in an attempt to get a *SAL* but no-one seems to be prepared to accept my identity card. They want me to provide them with further evidence of identification which I cannot produce – because I have not got any.

Written by Mrs Matu Ngiela, a Zairean woman living in London. This account was written originally in French.

LA VIE EN GRANDE-BRETAGNE

LIFE IN BRITAIN

FRENCH

A l'école à Londres

Quand j'ai commencée l'école primaire, j'ai dû apprendre l'anglais dès le début. Ainsi j'avais un enseignant particulier. Cela créa une jalousie chez mes collègues de classe. Pour rendre mon problème plus compliqué, je parlais français, une langue que notre enseignant préféré parlait aussi. Quand nous parlions français, personne d'autre ne pouvait comprendre. Les autres enfants devinrent méchants envers moi. Je rentrais souvent à la maison avec des bleus et affamée parce qu'ils crachaient dans ma boîte de nourriture.

J'étais confuse et triste pendant toutes les années passées à l'école primaire. J'ai passé toutes ces années à essayer de m'intégrer dans les groupes. C'était très difficile parce que personne ne comprenait ce que je disais. Sur le chemin de l'école, je pensais à notre plantation de riz au Zaïre. On mettait des heures de marche ma grand-mère et moi pour y arriver sous le soleil accablant de l'après-midi. Ma grand-mère parlait souvent de mon père. Elle disait: "Quand tu arriveras chez les Blancs, dis à ton père de ne jamais oublier ceux qu'il a laissés ici. Les gens qui nettoyaient ses couches et qui l'ont aidé à arriver là où il est maintenant. Dis-lui d'envoyer régulièrement de l'argent pour aider ces gens".

At school in London

When I began primary school, I had to learn English from the beginning. So I had a special teacher. This caused a lot of jealousy with my other class mates. To add to my problems, I spoke French, which was the language that our favourite primary school teacher also spoke. When we spoke to each other nobody else could understand. The other children turned violent towards me. I would regularly go home with bruises on my back, hungry because they would spit in my lunch box.

I felt confused and sad throughout my years in primary school. I spent most of those years trying to fit into groups. It was very difficult because nobody understood what I was saying.

I would often go to school and think about our rice plantation in Zaire. It used to take me and my grandmother hours to walk there in the blazing afternoon sun. My grandmother had talked about my father a great deal. She would say, 'When you go to this land of white people tell your father that he should never forget the people who he left behind. The people who washed his nappies and helped him be where he is now. Tell him he should send money back home regularly to help those people.'



*My memory of
Zaire, drawn by a
9 year old boy*

Quand je suis arrivée à l'école secondaire j'ai dû travailler dur pour être intégrée. J'ai cru que pour m'intégrer je devais être turbulente comme mes amis. J'ai commencé à suivre leur exemple: j'ai cassé un tuyau de gaz dans le laboratoire et je me suis querellée avec mon directeur d'études.

C'est seulement en troisième année que j'ai réellement commencé à travailler en classe. J'ai commencé à me sentir coupable de vivre en Angleterre pendant que ma famille souffrait au Zaïre. C'est quand j'ai appris que mes deux tantes étaient mortes que je me suis rendue compte du degré de pauvreté de mon pays. Mon père a cessé d'envoyer de l'argent au Zaïre. J'ai pensé que je devais prendre la relève.

Ecrit by Atandjo Otshudi, une jeune femme de 17 ans étudiante au Six Form Centre, Islington, Londres. Vous pourrez trouver d'autres extraits de son histoire à la page 30.

When I started secondary school I still had to work hard to be accepted. I began to think that to fit in I had to misbehave like most of my friends. I started to follow their example. I broke the gas taps in the science lab and I was involved in a fight with my tutor.

It was not until the third year that I really started to work in class. I began to feel really guilty about living in London while my family in Zaïre suffered. The news of two of my aunts dying made me realise the poverty in my country. My father has given up sending money to his family. I felt that I had to take over.

Written by Atandjo Otshudi, a 17 year old young woman studying at Islington Sixth Form Centre, London. Some more of her story is on page 30.

FRENCH

L'interrogation écrite

Quand j'ai commencé l'école je ne parlais que le français. Le premier jour de classe je devais passer une interrogation écrite. J'étais invitée avec d'autres enfants à aller dans une salle pour une interrogation. Je n'avais pas d'autre choix que d'aller dans la salle. Quand je suis arrivée tout le monde était déjà installé avec une feuille devant soi. Je voulais dire à la maîtresse que je ne pouvais pas faire l'interrogation mais je ne savais pas comment le dire, alors je me suis assise comme tout le monde. J'ai essayé de lire mais je ne pouvais pas. Des larmes coulaient de mes yeux. Ma main était mouillée car j'avais gardé l'écritoire* pendant très longtemps dans la même position.

Quand la maîtresse m'a vue, elle m'a emmenée dans une autre salle où elle m'a offert une tasse de thé et elle m'a demandé de quel pays je venais. Elle m'a dit qu'elle savait aussi parler français. Elle m'a dit que je ne devais pas pleurer ou me faire du souci parce que l'interrogation était juste pour connaître notre niveau. L'interrogation était facile après qu'elle l'a expliquée.

Ecrit par une fille de neuf ans, élève dans une école primaire de Londres.

The test

When I started school I only knew French. On my first day at school I had to do a test. My name and other children's names were called out to go to a room for a test. I didn't know what to do or say except to go to the room. When I got there everyone sat down and had a paper in front of them. I wanted to tell the teacher that I couldn't take the test but I didn't know how to say it so I sat down like everyone else. I tried to read it but I couldn't. Tears were rolling down my face. My hand was all wet because I had been holding the pen for a long time without moving.

When the teacher saw me, she called me and took me to another room where she gave me a cup of tea and asked me where I came from. She said that she spoke French as well. She said I didn't have to cry or worry because the test was only to see how much we knew. The test was easy once she explained it.

Written by a 9 year old girl at school in London.

FRENCH

L'apprentissage de l'anglais

Quand je suis arrivée en Angleterre en provenance du Zaïre je ne parlais pas anglais. Je ne savais même pas comment dire "bonjour". Je partageais un pupitre avec une fille appelée Rachel. Je ne savais pas que faire alors je la copiais mot à mot. Une fois, après avoir terminé une histoire elle a signé "Rachel". J'ai copié cela aussi. La maîtresse a cru que c'était de la faute de Rachel. Elle l'a grondée et moi je n'ai rien pu dire. Quand j'ai atteint l'âge de dix ans je comprenais bien l'anglais, alors je me suis excusée auprès de Rachel.

Écrit par Angela Mukeza, une fille de 11 ans à l'école Mount Carmel, Islington, Londres.

Learning English

When I came to England from Zaïre I didn't know any English. I didn't even know how to say 'hello'. I used to sit at a table with a girl called Rachel. I didn't know what to do so I copied her and when she finished her story she wrote 'by Rachel'. I copied that too. My teacher thought that Rachel had done it so she told Rachel off and I couldn't say anything. When I was ten I knew a lot of English and I apologised to Rachel.

Written by Angela Mukeza, an 11 year old girl at Mount Carmel School, Islington, London.

Loneliness

We felt very sad to leave the rest of my family in suffering. When we first came we lived in a hotel in Silvertown. Then after one month we moved to our own house. I felt happy because we had a proper home and sad because I missed my own home in my country. We have friends here now but no relatives. That's why it's lonely.

Written by Nanou Nseki, a 12 year old girl at Sarah Bonnell School, Newham, London. Some more of Nanou's writing is on page 18.

Nanou Nseki at school in Newham, London



Brian Morrison

FRENCH

Solitude

Nous avions beaucoup de peine à quitter notre famille dans la souffrance. À notre arrivée nous avons vécu dans un hôtel à Silvertown. Un mois après nous avons déménagé pour notre maison. J'étais contente qu'on ait notre propre maison mais j'étais toujours triste parce que notre maison au pays me manquait. Nous avons maintenant des amis ici mais pas de membres de la famille. Et à cause de cela on se sent toujours seul.

Écrit par Nanou Nseki, une fille de 12 ans, élève à l'école Sarah Bonnell, Newham, Londres. Vous pourrez trouver d'autres écrits de Nanou à la page 18.

Je viens du Zaïre

Un monde différent où les gens parlent une langue différente
 Un temps froid qui oblige les gens à mettre un gilet ou un manteau
 J'allais à l'école
 L'école où je ne connaissais personne et ne savais que dire
 Une vue différente qui faisait errer mon esprit
 Un terrain de jeux différent où tout le monde crie, cours, mâche et joue
 Sauf moi, qui n'avais personne avec qui parler ou jouer
 Personne ne me connaissait et personne ne voulait me connaître
 Personne ne faisait d'effort pour me parler mais je m'efforçais de me faire des amis.
 Je paraissais si différente des autres qu'ils se moquaient de moi.
 Je viens du Zaïre, très loin d'ici, je leur disais
 Personne ne faisait attention, et personne ne voulait faire attention à moi puisqu'ils ne me comprenaient pas.
 Tous mes amis du pays me manquent
 Ce sont les seuls amis que j'avais et que j'aurai toujours.
 Je souhaiterais rentrer jouer avec eux comme on avait l'habitude de jouer,
 Comme on avait l'habitude de parler
 Comme on avait l'habitude de partager nos sentiments.

Écrit par Solange, une fille de 14 ans, élève à l'école secondaire, Islington, Londres.

I came from Zaïre

A different world, where people speak a different language
 A cold temperature that makes people wear a jacket or coat.
 I was going to school –
 The school where I didn't know anyone and didn't know what to say.
 A different view that made my mind wonder
 A different playground where everyone shouts, runs, chews and plays,
 Except me, who stood there with no-one to talk to or play with.
 No-one knew me and no-one wanted to know me
 No-one tried to talk to me but I tried to make some friends.
 I looked so different from everyone else that they laughed at me
 I came from Zaire, far away from here,
 I would tell them
 Still no-one cared, no-one wanted to care for me, since they didn't understand me.
 I miss all my friends back home
 They were the only friends I had and always will be
 I wish I could go back to play with them the way we used to play,
 The way we used to talk
 And the way we used to share our feelings.

Written by Solange, a 14 year old girl at secondary school in Islington, London.



John Anthony/Panos Pictures

Young girls in Zaire styling their hair

ETRE REFUGIE BEING A REFUGEE

FRENCH

L'histoire des réfugiés

Certaines personnes sont tristes d'être venues en Angleterre et d'avoir laissé tant d'amis dans leur pays. Ceci arrive à beaucoup de gens. Ma mère et mon père étaient très tristes de devoir nous envoyer ailleurs. Ce n'était pas de leur faute, ils devaient le faire à cause de la guerre au Zaïre. Mon père m'avait dit que je devais aller vivre avec ma tante.

A notre arrivée en Angleterre, nous avons eu un entretien avec les autorités et ma tante leur a dit qu'elle était notre maman. Nous avons un interprète qui parlait notre langue et on nous a fait attendre dans une salle jusqu'au soir. Nous étions logés dans un hôtel à Hounslow West. C'était le 10 janvier 1992. Je pleurais encore jusqu'à ce qu'il soit l'heure d'aller se coucher. Le monsieur qui nous a aidés à l'aéroport lors du deuxième entretien était passé nous voir puisque nous ne connaissions personne. Nous sommes restés à l'hôtel pendant une semaine et ensuite on nous a changés d'hôtel.

Plus tard ma tante s'aperçut que l'une de ses amies vivait à Londres. Elle voulait aller vivre avec elle. Nous sommes restés chez elle pendant quelques mois et, un jour où ma tante s'était rendue au marché où l'on vend des produits afro-antillais, elle rencontra un homme avec qui elle commença à sortir.

Quelques jours plus tard mon père a téléphoné pour savoir comment on se portait. J'ai parlé à mon père pendant quelques minutes, puis j'ai commencé à pleurer. Cela me faisait de la peine de penser que j'avais quitté mon père, ma mère et mes frères. Ma tante ne s'occupait plus de nous comme il le fallait alors les agents du service social sont venus nous récupérer. Nous sommes allés vivre avec des parents adoptifs. Ils ont de grands enfants qui n'habitent plus avec eux.

Si vous êtes réfugié ne croyez pas être le seul dans la situation. Il y a beaucoup de monde comme vous.

Ecrit par une fille de 11 ans, élève dans une école secondaire.

Refugee story

Some people feel sad when they come to England and they leave lots of their friends in their country. This happens to lots of people. My mum and dad were very sad that they had to send us away. It wasn't their fault, they had to do it because of the war in Zaïre. My dad told me that I would be going with my aunt.

When we got to England, we went to the interview room and my aunt told these people that she was our mum. We had an interpreter who spoke our language and we went to wait in this

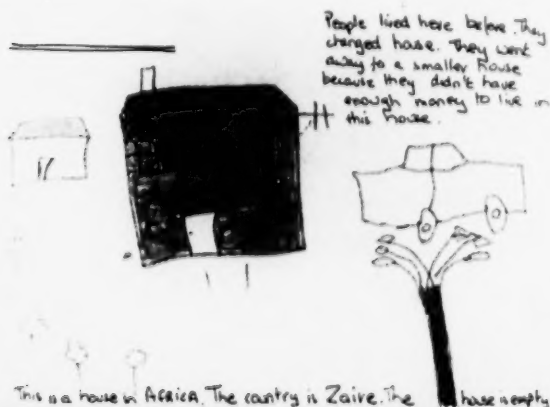
room until night. We went to a hotel in Hounslow West. It was 10 January 1992. We went to sleep, I was still crying. The man that helped us at the airport in the second interview came to see us because we didn't know anyone. We stayed in that hotel for a week and then they changed the hotel.

Then my aunt found that one of her friends was in London. My aunt wanted to live with them. We stayed there for a few months until one day my aunt went by herself to this market where you get black people's food. She met a man and they started going out with each other.

A few days later my dad phoned to know how we are. I spoke to my dad for a few minutes. I started to cry. It made me very sad to think that I'd left my mum and dad and my brothers. My aunt wasn't looking after us properly so the social worker came and got us. We started to live with foster parents. They have older boys that don't live with them anymore.

So if you are a refugee don't think that you are the only one. There are lots of people like you.

Written by an 11 year old girl at secondary school.



Drawing by Zaïrean child at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

FRENCH

Une lettre au pays

Le 23 mars 1994

Mon cher Chatel,

Je ne t'ai pas vu depuis six ans. Tu te demandes peut-être où je suis. Après avoir quitté Kinshasa nous sommes partis en Belgique. Nous y avons passé environ trois ans mais à présent je suis à Londres et j'y habite depuis près de quatre ans.

J'étudie dans une école secondaire au centre de Londres. C'est une école anglaise où j'apprends tout en anglais (à part le cours de français). C'était très difficile au début. Je devais travailler dur pour apprendre encore une langue de plus, l'anglais, après avoir appris le français à Kinshasa. J'ai des difficultés à comprendre certains cours tels que la science parce qu'il y a parfois des longs termes. Mais j'aime toutes les matières parce que je sais qu'elles pourront m'aider à l'avenir. Mes cours préférés sont l'éducation physique, l'histoire et le français.

Les cours commencent à 8h 55 ce qui est très tôt compte tenu du temps qu'il fait à Londres car en hiver il fait très froid et parfois il neige. On peut facilement glisser sur la neige si on n'est pas prudent.

Dans ma classe il y a environ 25 élèves, et je sais que tu ne vas pas le croire parce qu'à Kinshasa on peut avoir entre 30 et 40 élèves dans une classe. Les maîtres sont gentils et ne frappent pas les enfants.

Avant d'arriver à Londres, je croyais trouver une cité propre où il n'y aurait pas de déchets sur le trottoir. Je fus surpris de constater que j'avais tort et que ce n'est pas ce à quoi je m'attendais. Les gens d'ici sont très patients car on peut voir des longues files d'attente aux arrêts de bus, dans les gares et dans les postes qui attendent sans se plaindre. Il y a des foules énormes mais elles ne se bousculent pas. Je sais qu'après avoir lu cela tu vas souhaiter venir à Londres, je serai ravi si tu peux le faire.

Meilleurs vœux

Ton ami,

Bolombo Motondo

Écrit par Bolombo Motondo, un garçon de 14 ans, élève à l'école George Orwell, Islington, à Londres. Vous pourrez trouver d'autres extraits des écrits de Bolombo aux pages 13 et 27.



Brian Morrison

Bolombo at school in London

A letter home

London 23 March 1994

Dear Chatel,

I have not seen you for the last six years. You may wonder where I am now. When we left Kinshasa we went to Belgium. We stayed there for about three years but now I am in London and I have been here for nearly four years.

I am at a secondary school in the heart of London. It's an English school where I learn all subjects in English (apart from French). It has been very difficult and hard work for me to learn yet another language, English, after learning French in Kinshasa. It's very hard for me to understand some lessons like science because sometimes there are some long words. But I like all my lessons because I know they are going to help me in future. My favourite lessons are PE, history and French.

My school starts at 8.55 a.m. which is too early for London weather because in winter it's freezing cold and sometimes it snows! If you walk in snow, you can easily slip if you are not careful.

The number of pupils in my class is about 25, and I know you won't believe it because in Kinshasa you can have as many as 30 to 40 in one class. The teachers are quite helpful and do not hit any of the children.

Before coming to London I thought it would be a clean city where there is no rubbish on the roads at all. I was surprised to see that I was wrong – it was not how I expected it to be. The people here are very patient because you can see long queues at bus stops, stations and post offices where people wait without complaining. There are large crowds but they never push each other.

I know after reading this you might like to come to London and I shall be very happy if you do.

Best wishes.

Your friend,

Bolombo Motondo

Written by Bolombo Motondo, a 14 year old boy at George Orwell School, Islington, London. Some more of Bolombo's writing is on pages 13 and 27.

ESPOIR POUR L'AVENIR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

LINGALA

Ndoto na ngayi mpo na ntango ekoya na Zaïre

Mateya oyo nalingi mingi na kelasi awa na poto ezali motuya. Soki nalingi na koma mobongisi nzela to masini, ndenge na sepeli nayango, ebongi nayekola makasi motuya. Elenge asengeli mpe azala makasi mpo na kokoma belilingi.

Na kokende kosalisa nzela mpo na mboka na biso. Na kosalisa mpe etanda. Tokosala makasi mpo totongisa lopitalo mpo na bato bazali na bokono mpe bandako mpo na bato bazangi yango.

Tozali mpe na posa ya mituka mpo na komema bato, batambolaka na makolo te. Mboka na biso esengeli mpe ezala na bakelasi mpo na bana, oyo ezali na Zaïre ekoki te.

Ekomami na elenge mobali Christian Mayala, elenge ya mbula zomi na misatu, moyekoli na kelasi ya Dagenham, Essex.

My dreams for the future of Zaïre

At school in England my favourite lesson is maths. If you want to be an engineer, like I do, you need to know a lot about maths. You also need to be good at drawing.

I am going to build a road for our country. I am also going to build a bridge. We are also going to build a hospital for people who are injured and some houses for people. We also need some more transport like cars and trucks so that people don't have to walk everywhere. Our country also needs some schools for children because there are not enough in Zaïre.

Written by Christian Mayala, a 13 year old boy at secondary school in Dagenham, Essex.

FRENCH

Espoir pour l'avenir

Je souhaite qu'il y ait des élections libres et justes au Zaïre. Il n'y pas de guerre civile mais des gens sont tués tous les jours. Les gens ne sont pas libres. J'aimerais, toutefois, rester en Grande-Bretagne après tout ce que j'ai vécu au Zaïre. J'aimerais avoir du travail en informatique ou tout autre emploi qui exige l'usage du cerveau. Il serait difficile pour mes enfants de retourner maintenant au Zaïre. Ils travaillent bien à l'école et sont bien intégrés.

Ecrit par Felix Matu, un Zaïrois vivant au sud de Londres. C'était un récit oral. L'histoire de sa vie se trouve aux pages 19 et suivantes.

Hopes for the future

I hope for free and fair elections and democracy in Zaïre. There isn't a civil war but people are being killed every day. People don't have their freedom. I would like to stay in Britain though, after all I've been through in Zaïre. I'd like a job in computing or any job that uses my brain. It would be very hard for my children to go back to Zaïre now. They are both getting on well at school here, and settled.

By Felix Matu, a Zaïrean man living in south London. This was an oral account. The story of his life starts on page 19.



Dancing and singing is important to people in Zaïre, drawn by Sheila Magengo Mbaticka (age 10).

L'avenir

Je voudrais rester ici pendant que la situation au Zaïre est mauvaise. La plupart de mes frères et sœurs sont en France et Allemagne comme réfugiés. J'attends toujours la décision du Ministère de l'Intérieur pour savoir si je peux rester. Je souhaite que les enfants reçoivent une bonne éducation en Grande-Bretagne. Ce sont les enfants qui me donnent l'espoir de vivre. Quand ils seront un peu plus grands, j'aimerais apprendre à coudre pour pouvoir me trouver un travail tel que coudre des habits à la maison par exemple. Ce n'est pas bien rémunéré mais c'est facile de trouver un tel emploi.

Si un jour le Zaïre retrouve sa situation d'autrefois et qu'il y a la paix, alors j'aimerais bien y retourner. Le Zaïre me manque et le niveau de vie que j'avais au Zaïre me manque aussi.

Écrit par Francine Songo, une Zaïroise vivant à Ilford, Essex. C'était un récit oral. Vous pourrez trouver d'autres extraits de son histoire aux pages 10, 12, 13, et 28.

The future

I want to stay here while the situation in Zaïre is so bad. Most of my sisters and brothers are living as refugees in France and Germany. I'm still waiting for a decision from the Home Office as to whether I can stay. I hope for a good education for the children in Britain. It is only the children that keep me going. Once they are a little bit older I'd like to learn sewing so I can find a job – sewing clothes at home. It's badly paid but easy to get work like that.

If, one day, Zaïre becomes what it was before and there's peace there then I'd like to go home. I miss Zaïre and I miss the standard of life I had in Zaïre, which was much better than my life here.

By Francine Songo, a Zaïrean woman living in Ilford, Essex. This was an oral account given in French. Some more of her story is on pages 10, 12, 13, and 29.

A reunion of friends at their home village near Kikwit



Dr Mayala

Resources for teachers

BOOKS - NON-FICTION:

Biddlecombe, Peter, *French Lessons in Africa*, London, Abacus, 1994.

Easy to read and well-written book by journalist who travelled for many years in francophone west and central Africa.

Depelchin, Jacques, *From the Congo Free State to Zaïre (1885-1974): Towards a Demystification of Economic and Political History*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1992. Powerful critique examining where the riches of the Congo have gone to: why does the Belgian economy thrive while Zaïre remains undeveloped?

Elliot, Jeffrey M., and Dymally, Mervyn M. (eds.), *Voices of Zaïre: Rhetoric or Reality?*, Washington DC, Washington Institute Press, 1990. Interviews with Zaïrean officials, including President Mobutu, opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi, and independent observers.

Ewens, Graeme, *Congo Colossus - The Life and Legacy of Franco and OK Jazz*, North Walsham, Buku Press, 1994. Account of the life and music of Zaïrean jazz musician Franco Luambo Makiadi; also looks at wider Zaïrean culture.

George, Susan, "Zaïre: Absolute Zero", Chapter 7 of *A Fate Worse Than Debt: A Radical Analysis of the Third World Debt Crisis*, London, Penguin, 1989, pp 106-118. A look at the financial situation of Zaïre and how this affects the daily lives of its people.

***Prison Conditions in Zaïre*, Human Rights Watch/Africa, London, 1994.**

Mbaya, Kankwenda (ed.), *Zaïre, What Destiny?*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1993. Collection of essays giving a comprehensive look at Zaïre's prospects. Particularly good on the education system.

Nzongola-Ntalaja (ed.), *Crisis in Zaïre: Myths and Realities*, Trenton (New Jersey), Africa World Press, 1986. Collection of articles which looks at the historical background to Zaïre's crisis and analyses what could be done.

Turnbull, Colin, *The Forest People*, Pimlico, London, 1993. Vivid description of years spent with the pygmy people of the Ituri Forest in north-east Zaïre.

BRIEFING PAPERS:

***Zaïre: Appeal By Amnesty International to the New Prime Minister*, London, Amnesty International, 1994.** Contains up-to-date accounts of human rights abuses.

***Zaïre: Collapsing Under Crisis*, London, Amnesty International, London, 1994.** Looks at the current deadlock, details human rights abuses.

***Zaïre: Violence Against Democracy*, London, Amnesty International, 1993.** Details government violence and repression of opposition.

***Zaïre: Inciting Hatred - Violence Against Kasaiens in Shaba*, Africa Watch, London, 1993.**

***Zaïrean refugees in the UK*, London, The Refugee Council, 1993.**

BOOKS - FICTION:

Stories

Burton, W.F.P., *The Magic Drum - Tales from Central Africa*, New York, Criterion Books, 1962. Collection includes Zaïrean stories.

Womersley, Harold, *In the Glow of the Log Fire*, London, Penielpress, 1975. Traditional Baluba stories.

Poems

Moore, Gerald and Beier, Ulli (eds.), *The Penguin Book of Modern African Poetry*, London, Penguin, 1984. Includes poems by Zaïreans.

MATERIALS ON REFUGEES:

International Broadcasting Trust, *Refugees in Today's Europe: An Action Video Pack*, 1992. A video with accompanying activities for 14-plus, available from Academy Television, 104 Kirkstall Road, Leeds LS3 1JS.

Melzak, S., and Warner, R., *Integrating Refugee Children into Schools*, Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture and Minority Rights Group, 1992. Six-page leaflet for teachers on the psychological aspects of working with refugee students. Single copies available free with an A4SAE from Minority Rights Group.

Rutter, Jill, *Refugees: We Left Because We Had To*, Refugee Council, 1991. For 14-18 year olds - background information and activities.

Rutter, Jill, *Refugees: A Resource Book for 8-13 Year olds*, Refugee Council, 1992.

Rutter, Jill, *Refugee Children in the Classroom*, Trentham Books, 1994. For teachers and others who work with refugee students - background information and ways of supporting refugee students. Includes a section on refugees from Zaïre.

USEFUL ADDRESSES:

Africa Book Centre, 38 King Street, London, WC2E 8JS.
Tel: 0171 240 6649 or 0171 497 0309

Amnesty International (Publications Department), British Section, 99 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1 4RE
Tel: 0171 814 6200

COREZAG (Community of Zaïrean Refugees), 728 Romford Road, Manor Park, London E12
Tel: 0181 514 5657/0181 478 2337

Human Rights Watch/Africa (formerly known as Africa Watch), 33 Islington High Street, London, N1 9LH
Tel: 0171 713 1995

Refugee Council, 3 Bondway, London, SW8 1SJ
Tel: 0171 820 3000

Zaïrean Community Association (ZACA), Selby Centre, Selby Road, London, N17 8JC Tel: 0181 365 1665

VOICES FROM ZAIRE is part of the AFRICAN VOICES SERIES.

VOICES FROM ANGOLA

VOICES FROM SUDAN

VOICES FROM UGANDA



'There are over 27,000 school-aged refugee children in Britain. The Voices series is a great psychological boost to them, and a valuable teaching aid for all students.'

Jill Rutter, Education Officer, Refugee Council



'In African Voices children as well as adults, speak directly and often with devastating clarity of their former homes, the horrors of civil war and oppression, and the difficulties of building new lives in exile. These writings are an important source of information, but

through their courage and optimism they also bring new insights and perspectives into our homes and classrooms. Voices from Zaire is an important and moving addition to the series.'

John McCarthy

Minority Rights Group

379 Brixton Road

London SW9 7DE

United Kingdom

Tel: (+44) (0) 171 978 9498

Fax: (+44) (0) 171 738 6265

Registered charity #282305. An international educational agency
with consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC)
A company limited by guarantee in the UK #1544957

BEST COPY AVAILABLE